THE CRYSTAL CITY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

ANDRÉ LAURIE

BY

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BOSTON

ESTES AND LAURIAT

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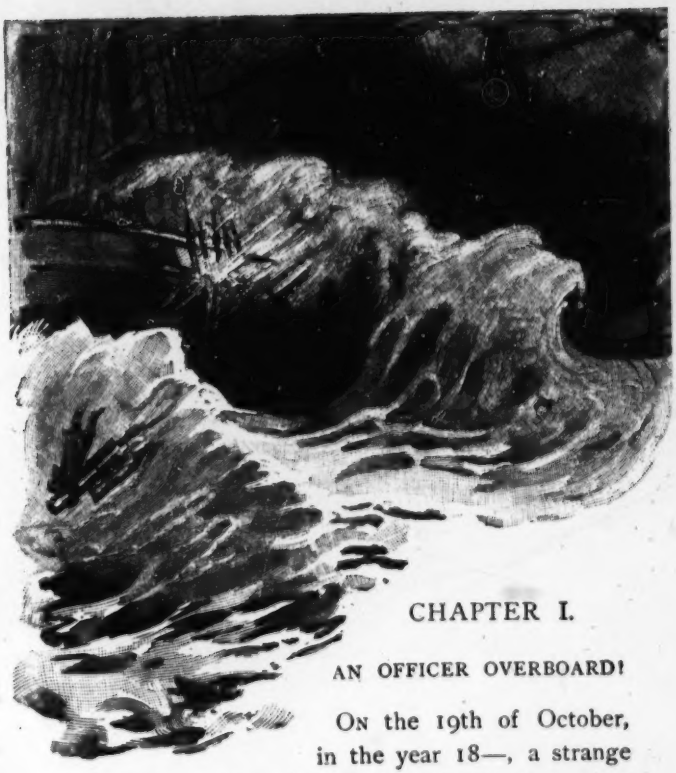

CHAPTER I.

AN OFFICER OVERBOARD!

On the 19th of October, in the year 18—, a strange and tragic accident happened on board the cruiser *Hercules, en route* for Lorient, after long and laborious duty on the station in the Gulf of Benin.

They were in mid-Atlantic, just above the Azores, as nearly as possible to the spot where 25° E. longitude crosses 36° N. latitude. The vessel was running at full speed to the N. N. E. before a

cyclone, which had come up about six o'clock in the evening. It was seven, and the starless night only added to the horror of the storm, when either a mistake on the part of the helmsman, or a sudden veering of the wind, brought the cruiser broadside to a formidable wave from the west. A liquid mountain struck the upper deck of the *Hercules* a blow as if a hammer had done it, carrying away with it the starboard gun and its carriage; then dashed away like a cataract, leaving a surface of thirty square feet or more shaved as clean as a hulk. The next instant, as the vessel pursued its course, running before the cyclone, a cry, followed by a second, was heard from the maintop: "An officer overboard, from the upper deck!" "A man wounded!" At the first call the luminous buoy was severed by the stroke of a hatchet, and Commander Harancourt, rushing to the speaking-trumpet, gave in person the order to stop. In two minutes one of the life-boats was afloat, and set off in the tumult of boiling waters in search, and disappeared into the darkness. Amid the gruesome howling of the wind and the furious blows of the waves, seemingly enraged at the slackened speed of the cruiser, the officer in command brought his verbal report to his chief. The officer carried away by the wave, with the cannon from the upper deck, was Midshipman Caoudal. The man wounded in the thigh by a splinter of the planking

was topman Yvon Kermadec. Every one crowded round to listen to the lugubrious report. A half-hour of intense anxiety passed before the life-boat signalled its return, and the fruitlessness of its search. It was hoisted on board, and the dripping crew were treated to a ration of hot rum. Every man of them was obliged to own, with a sob in his voice, that any further attempt at rescue would be useless. The sea held its prey, and would not give it up. The *Hercules* went on her way, with the poignant regret of every one on board at abandoning to the deep a brave young fellow, certain of promotion, fallen ingloriously and without advantage to any one, in full health and hope, at the threshold of his career. René Caoudal was the most popular officer on board, a great favourite with his brother officers; and, among the roughest of the men, there was not one who did not shed a tear.

When the commander went below to the infirmary to see Yvon Kermadec, he was coming to from a deep swoon, thanks to the energetic means applied by Dr. Patrice, and the frightened blue eyes in his honest, brown Breton face had opened. Presently memory returned to him with the pain; and he explained what occurred as follows:

"I was leaning with my back against the mizzen-mast. M. Caoudal came and went, as if he were surprised at the change of wind, when, all of a

sudden, the wave broke right over us. I never saw one like it all the five years since I left Paimpol, nor even before that, when I used to go fishing for cod. It was like a wall of molten metal pouring itself over the *Hercules*. Everything was broken up, smashed to pieces, and washed away. I had a sort of confused vision of M. Caoudal thrown against and clinging to the breech of the cannon on the upper deck, then, lifted up and swept away with the rest. At the same instant I was blown like a flag against the mast near which I was standing, and an enormous piece of wood broke my left leg, and then I became unconscious. Better for me if I had succumbed," added the poor lad, in a discouraged tone. "What is the use of living, if I am to lose a leg? I shall be good for nothing. It would have been far better if I had been washed away instead of M. Caoudal! An officer like him is not met with every day!"

This was said with such evident sincerity that the young doctor was deeply moved. Nobody knew better than he what an irreparable loss the French navy had sustained in René Caoudal. He had been his most intimate friend and companion since their childhood. This praise of one whom he had always considered as a brother touched him to such a degree that his hand became unsteady, and he was obliged to wait a moment or two before he could proceed with the dressing of the broken limb. "Come,

come, my brave Kermadec, no weakness," said he to the topman. "Your leg is not lost yet, and I have good hope of your keeping it, but I can't promise you that, unless you take the greatest care to use every means to make it as good again as ever. As to the regrets you express at the premature end of M. Caoudal, certainly they are proper! A braver heart, a more intelligent and distinguished officer, a better son, never lived!"

"How his poor mother will grieve!" pursued the topman, unconsciously giving expression to the thought that was in the doctor's mind. "It is hard for us who are left behind; it does n't seem right; people that are devoted to one another here ought to make a compact to die together. Dear M. René! It was he who convinced me of the folly of spending my money at the drink-shop when I went ashore. I was so glad to have got the better of that habit. But now, who will give me good advice? Who will care whether I keep right or not? Clever gentleman though he was, he did n't think it beneath him to talk to me and teach me a heap of things. He used to call me *Friend Kermadec.* Ah, me! I would have gone through fire and water for him, and to see him swept away under my very eyes, without being able to lift a finger to save him!"

The topman paused, choked with grief.

"You know how dear he was to me, my brave

Kermadec," said the doctor at length. "I will try to fill his place to you. If ever you are in need of advice or of help, if you think I can be useful in any way, come to me; for his sake I shall be happy to serve you."

The dressing of the injured limb was accomplished. The commander and the doctor, having cordially pressed the man's hand, left him and went on deck. They conversed a few minutes about the deplorable loss of the young officer before the commander went to draw up his report.

Everybody in the officers' deck saloon was awaiting Patrice with impatience. Still quite young, but as modest as he was clever, lively, a pleasant companion, the doctor was every one's favourite. No festivity was complete without him. But now, unusual cordiality was shown to him. They all knew what a close friendship had existed between him and Caoudai. They listened with breathless interest to the details of the accident that he had gathered from Kermadec.

"What you have to say only adds to our grief," said Lieutenant Briant, an officer about forty years of age, with large, prominent, short-sighted eyes, and grave and somewhat repellent expression of face; "and for my part, I cannot tell you how pained I am at his premature death."

"Dear, brave Caoudal," cried Midshipman Des

Bruyères, "if he was good-natured and willing to help his inferiors, he was none the less a jolly fellow among his equals. Where shall we find such a cheery messmate? He can never be replaced."

By a common impulse their thoughts turned to the Caoudal family, and the doctor did all he could to satisfy their respectful curiosity about them.

"René," said he, "was the son and the grandson of a sailor. Like him, his father and grandfather were both drowned at sea. He was the only son; and poor Madame Caoudal had a great horror of his entering a profession which she felt to be so cruel, and she never ceased to wage war against any tendency in him towards the vocation of the sea, to which she always owed a grudge. Her friends and the servants were warned to be very careful to abstain from any nautical allusions or anything that might tend to foster a desire to follow the father's example in that respect. Vain precautions! They might as well have tried to prevent a fish from swimming. René was a born sailor; no education but for that end would satisfy him. No one could prevent his seeing from a bend of the river a silhouette of a flying vessel, and what they failed to tell him he divined somehow or other. Nothing in the shape of a boat had ever figured among his toys; but, at seven years of age, he was found making one.

"Whence had he got the idea? Surely it must

have been inborn. From that time, all his thoughts, waking and sleeping, were taken up with long voyages, to the despair of his poor mother, who saw the birth and growth of a force against which she was powerless to contend. It was still worse when his little cousin Hélène came to live with them. The daughter of a sister of Lieutenant Caoudal, Hélène had been brought up by her mother to worship the profession, and with the most ardent admiration for maritime exploits. The child had been suddenly left an orphan; Madame Caoudal had given her the shelter of her roof, and, with the advent of her niece, fell the frail barriers that she vainly tried to raise between René and an irresistible vocation. At this time the two children were twelve years of age. They had not known each other before, the little girl having always lived in Algeria; but from the first day they were sworn friends. They had the same tastes, the same ambitions. Their talks ran always on the same theme,—distant voyages, expeditions to the North Pole, naval battles, and discoveries of unknown lands. Hélène's bitter regret at being only a girl was somewhat mitigated by the thought of seeing her dreams take shape by proxy. Meanwhile they prepared for future exploits by the most ridiculous freaks. Our embryo navigators made it a duty to leave no nook or corner of the neighbourhood on the banks of the Loire, in which

they lived, unexplored. Their adventures 'by sea and by land' were numberless. Hardly a day passed without their coming home either with a bruised forehead, or a limb more or less damaged, and their clothes torn. From that time, René had no wish for any career other than that of the sea. Madame Caoudal, who was a wise as well as a tender mother, brought herself at last to see it, and, sacrificing from that time forward the long cherished hope of keeping her son near her, generously kept her disappointment to herself. She opened, to the children's great delight, the long closed wardrobes where she kept the sacred relics of her husband and his father, and thenceforth everything relating to the navy became a sort of religion to them. It was now no more a question of adventures '*à la* Robinson Crusoe,' but seriously to think of preparing for the entrance examination for the naval school. I completed my medical studies the same year that René was admitted. Though there was a difference of six years between us, — a great difference at that age, precluding any childish intimacy, — we had always been good friends; we were neighbours, and our mothers on terms of close intimacy. It was a great satisfaction to me when I joined the *Hercules*. I expected great things from this promising sailor. But how miserably have our hopes been disappointed!"

All listened to this account of their late comrade with sympathetic interest, and Lieutenant Briant thanked the doctor in the name of his brother officers:

"All the details you have given us about him whom we have lost," added he, "only make his memory the more dear, if that were possible. On you, my poor fellow, will devolve the painful task of breaking the mournful news to his mother. Tell her, when she can bear to hear it, of the esteem and affection we all bore for him."

"And his cousin;" said Des Bruyères, thoughtlessly, "for her also it will be a frightful blow. Perhaps she was his *fiancée!*"

"No," replied the doctor, rather drily, "Mademoiselle Hélène Rieux and Caoudal were not engaged. We are speaking in confidence here. Why should I not tell you that Madame Caoudal's great desire was that they should marry, but she was destined to be disappointed in this wish also, for they had flatly refused to lend themselves to the project. Hélène and René were brother and sister, or, rather, their regard for one another was like that of two brothers."

While they chatted thus in the officers' deck saloon, and Commander Harancourt wrote the details of the catastrophe in the log-book, the storm lost its force and soon ceased altogether. A quieter sea suc-

ceeded the formidable waves that had subjected the *Hercules* to so rude an assault. The watch changed at the usual hour; the men on the watch took up their posts, whilst their comrades separated, to seek in their hammocks the rest they so much needed. All night long the cruiser rolled like a cork on the chopping sea. Then, towards morning, it quieted down again, and, when the sun appeared above the horizon, it lighted up a sea as smooth as a mirror. The *Hercules* pursued her course. She very soon touched at Lisbon, and was able to repair her damages, after which she again put to sea and, in a few days, arrived at Lorient. It was by this time a fortnight since the loss of Midshipman Caoudal, but the sad event was still fresh in the memory of all. Kermadec, well on the road towards recovery, was already able, by the help of a pair of crutches, to hoist himself up on deck.

Doctor Patrice's heart was as heavy as lead at the thought of the task that lay before him with regard to his friend's unfortunate mother, but, with thoughtful delicacy, the commander had desired that she should be informed in this way, rather than by an official despatch from Lisbon.

The pilot had just boarded the *Hercules*, bringing letters, impatiently awaited by all on board. Suddenly, the commander appeared with a radiant face, and a blue paper in his hand.

"I have good news for you, gentlemen," said he. "Midshipman Caoudal is safe and sound; picked up at sea by a mail-boat from La Plata. Two days ago he was in the hospital at Lorient, and is now convalescent."

CHAPTER II.

A PRODIGIOUS ADVENTURE.

THE doctor's joy at learning that his friend still lived was as great as the grief of the past two weeks. What a relief to be spared the sad errand to Madame Caoudal; not to be obliged to face her grief, and that of her niece! And for himself, what happiness to have his friend restored to him; to be able to hope that René would live many years to torment his friends, to frighten them to death by his escapades, and yet to be liked by everybody, as of yore! But did anybody ever hear of such a curious piece of luck? To fall into the sea, in a furious storm, to the depth of a thousand feet, and then to find himself comfortable and calm in the roadstead at Lorient, two days before his comrades! The scamp! No one but René Caoudal could have met with such adventures. How they longed to see him! Doctor Patrice lost no time in finding him, and hearing his account of himself. Ten minutes after landing, he entered the room where the midshipman was lying. The first greetings over, he examined the young man carefully, feeling all over him, apply-

ing the stethoscope, and interrogating him, to make sure that there was no injury. His examination over, the doctor felt puzzled, for, physically, he was sound enough, and there did not appear to be any reason for his keeping his bed. And yet he could not conceal from himself a singular change in the mental condition of the young sailor. Sad, preoccupied, with pale face, and distrait expression, he evidently found difficulty in fixing his attention, and responded with reluctance to the eager questions of his friend. Truth to say, he appeared annoyed by them.

"What is the matter with you?" said Patrice, anxiously. "You do not seem to be any the worse for your immersion. I must say, I cannot understand why you lie here like a log. Come, make an effort! Take a turn out-of-doors; that will put you to rights in a twinkling."

"Oh! a walk in Lorient!" said he, in a contemptuous tone.

"Lorient is not to be despised!" cried the doctor. "In any case, it would be better than lying here in the dumps, for you are in the dumps; that is evident. Come, what have you got on your mind?"

The only reply was a discouraged shrug of the shoulders.

"Do you feel ill?"

"Ill? No; not precisely ill."

"Then what *do* you feel like? Have you any muscular pain, or any sprain? How long were you in the water?"

Again René shrugged his shoulders.

"How do I know? Besides, what does it matter?" muttered he, impatiently.

And turning towards the wall, he hid his face with his arm, as if to insinuate that the conversation was burdensome. The doctor looked at him with surprise, which rapidly changed to uneasiness. What ailed him? Such a frank and lively fellow, with such an open nature, and so transparent! Had his head struck against a reef at the bottom of the sea? Must he attribute this dumbness, this unusual sullenness, to some injury of the brain?

"How is it; don't you know?" he asked, determined to make him speak. "You must be able to remember what happened when you came to the surface. You were not long under the water, perhaps. How many minutes, should you judge?"

A deep sigh was the sole response.

"Perhaps you lost consciousness?"

René was silent.

"You were found lashed to an empty barrel, if I am rightly informed," said Patrice. "Was it long before you got hold of it? And the rope,—where did you get it from?"

Another shrug of the shoulders, and impatient turn of the head, as if to shake off importunate noise. It seemed as if the voice of his friend grated on his nerves like a saw scraping marble. For some minutes, the doctor pressed questions on him without getting any answer.

"My dear friend," said he, at last, vexed in his turn by this behaviour, "your cold bath appears to me to have had a most unfortunate effect upon your temper. You are not ill, but you are very sulky. If I bore you, say so. I will go away. It is very simple."

He turned towards the door. At this, René appeared to make an effort to rouse himself from his dejection.

"Patrice! Stephen!" called he. "Don't be angry. Come back. You know I am glad to see you. You have no need that I should throw myself into your arms to prove that, I think."

"Confound it! There is a slight difference between throwing your arms around my neck, and giving me such a reception as this, you must own."

René sighed afresh, shaking his head in a lugubrious fashion.

"Come, let us begin all over again. What on earth is the matter with you, with your sighs and your head-shakings? One would think that you concealed some terrible secret. Have you discov-

ered a conspiracy among the monsters of the deep, or have you heard the sirens sing at the bottom of the sea, and care for nothing but their music?"

To the doctor's great surprise, a deep flush suffused René's pale face, and his eyes brightened, while a smile leaped to his lips. The two friends waited a moment, in silence, looking one another in the face.

"Well, explain yourself, I beg," said the doctor, at length, crossing his arms on his breast.

René reassumed his dejected attitude.

"What would be the use?" said he, in a tone of lassitude; "you would not believe me."

"Why?"

"Because, if I spoke, it would be to tell you of such improbable things, so ridiculous, you would never believe me. And you would be right, no doubt, if it were not for one irrefutable proof; one material proof."

"A proof of what?"

"Of what happened to me."

"Where? When? How? You are enough to provoke a saint with your reticence. I have a very good mind to shake you!"

René remained silent a moment. Then he took a resolution.

"Here, feel my pulse," said he. "Have I any feverish symptoms?"

"Not a shadow of fever. A cool skin, and a pulse as steady as mine."

"Look at me. Do I look scared? Is my forehead burning? Do I look like a man demented, under the influence of delirium?"

"Not the least in the world. You are like a fine lad, a friend of mine, the prey of an unaccountable mood, but in possession of all his faculties."

"Then, whatever I tell you, will you believe it?"

"If you swear to me that you speak seriously, I will believe it without a doubt."

"I give you my *word of honour* that what I am going to tell you is strictly true. And yet, I hesitate."

"Well, go along. I never knew any one so suspicious."

"You have never known me in circumstances such as I am now placed in. Stephen, you are my dearest friend; almost my elder brother. I would not deceive you, would I? Besides, to what end? What I am going to tell you is *true*. It is incomprehensible, but it is *true*. I would rather keep to myself the secret of this strange adventure, and I had resolved never to speak of it to any one, certain of not being believed. But here you are. You question me, and I have such a habit of telling you everything that happens to me that, on my soul, I will risk it. Who knows? Perhaps, between us,

we may arrive at some plausible theory, at some practical conclusion."

Intensely puzzled by this preamble, not less than by the serious and deeply affected expression of the midshipman's face, the doctor took a seat by the bedside, and prepared to listen. René, leaning on his elbow, with a dreamy look fixed on something visible to himself alone, began his story in these words:

"You have not forgotten the circumstances I was placed in when I was washed overboard, on that Monday, the 19th of October. We were in a cyclone, running N. N. E., with a tremendous sea on, and the first thing you all knew was that a huge wave carried me and the gun away with it. Doubtless, a search was made for me, and the vessel was stopped, to wait for me. I know what is the usual thing to do at such times, and, at the moment, I fully expected to be picked up."

The doctor signified by a gesture that all that had been done.

"Unfortunately, or, rather, fortunately,—for if I had been unluckily fished up then, I should have missed an unheard-of spectacle,—in falling, an irresistible impulse made me curl my legs and arms round the breech of the gun. The mass of steel was ingulfed in the water, and carried me down by its weight. In a moment, I felt the absurdity of

what I was doing, and tried to relax my hold, in order to rise to the surface. Then I lost consciousness. So far, nothing remarkable happened. Once, I felt I was almost rescued, but instinctively I clung to my gun, which cut through the water like a flash of lightning. My last lucid thought was that I had come to the surface, and was floating like a dead fish. It is all linked together in my memory; I see now what happened. I see the plunge into the water, I feel the cold of the steel in my arms, and the loss of breath, caused by the rapid dive. Then, for the second time, I lost consciousness. How long did it last? Who will ever know? Where was I? What was this place; this never to be forgotten scene?"

The officer paused a moment, a far-off look in his eyes, and his face pale.

"When I recovered my senses," resumed he, "I was lying on a soft couch. Just at first I was unable to open my eyes; thought came back to me, but slowly; I heard, but without being able to understand what was going on around me, voices speaking in a language unknown to me. At first I lay in a sort of vague languor — a reverie. The voices ceased. Suddenly memory returned, and I thought to myself: 'I must have fallen into the water; I was suffocated. Some one has fished me out.' I opened my eyes with difficulty,—my eyelids were as heavy as lead,—expecting to find myself in the ship's hospital,

with you bending over me on one side, brushes and flannels in hand, and my good Kermadec on the other, busy rubbing his officer. And I remember wondering which of our fellows had taken my place on the watch. Instead of the hospital, instead of your faces, this is what I saw: I was lying in the middle of a spacious grotto, the walls of which seemed made of red coral, of the most exquisite shade. A silvery light fell from the roof, displaying a bed of ivory covered with a thick purple texture, as soft as velvet to the touch. Under my head were piled up cushions made of precious stuffs, curiously embroidered.

"The floor of the grotto was covered with the finest sand; and here and there spread magnificent carpets. Ivory seats of antique form were disposed here and there; also an embroidery-frame of smooth ivory with an unfinished piece of embroidery in it; and a lyre of pale tortoise-shell resting on a pile of rumpled cushions, as if it had been thrown down in haste. In a basket made of rushes I saw wools of faded colours; a roll of papyrus, open. I lay there, bewildered, looking about me, wondering what world I had wandered into, when a sweet voice, as clear as crystal, suddenly uttered an exclamation. I turned my head quickly. How shall I describe to you what I saw? A young girl and an old man stood beside my couch, and appeared to have entered from an

inner grotto at the head of the bed. The old man, tall, almost gigantic, was stately in the extreme. He wore round his brow a gold fillet; his long beard covered his breast with snowy waves. Draped in a voluminous mantle of white woollen material, enriched with a border of coloured embroidery, he looked like an antique statue come to life. As to the young girl, I never saw anything so beautiful. She seemed to me a sort of ethereal being, made of the same sort of light as that shed from the roof of the grotto, — tall, upright, slender as a reed. She was clothed in a soft tunic of pale green, the colour of the waves, as you sometimes see them at sunrise. Her fair hair, held back from her face with strings of pearls, fell, in a silken mass, to her feet. Her pure brow was crowned with a garland of sea-weed, and in her clear eyes I thought I saw the spirit of the ocean, herself. She looked at me; then pointing to me with her slim finger, she pronounced a short phrase. The old man replied. I made an effort to hear them, but I could understand nothing they said. If my recollection of the classics, — hazy enough, I must own, — does not deceive me, the language they spoke in was Greek.

"Meanwhile, the old man came towards me, placed his hand on my forehead, on my heart, and felt my pulse, just as you would have done, my dear Stephen. The young girl, leaning on his shoulder, turned her

ravishing face towards me, with an expression half curious, half mocking. I felt that my modern uniform, with its gold lace, and my leather boots, must have had a pitiful effect on this royal couch. You cannot imagine how mean and shabby I felt in the midst of all this luxury, this fairy, archaic, fantastic magnificence. However, my host and hostess continued conversing beside my couch; and by their looks and their gestures I saw that they were speaking of me. The old man looked more and more grave; several times he raised his hand towards the roof of the grotto. It seemed to me that the young girl asked something; playfully, at first; then, getting almost angry. Her charming brow darkened; she frowned, and her limpid eyes flashed. The old man, without troubling himself at this display of anger, signified 'no' with his head in a severe manner. At last, releasing himself gently, but firmly, from the young girl who clung to him, he walked to an ivory coffer, took from it a gold cup, and began to concoct a beverage. The young girl stayed by my side. She watched the old man for a few moments, with her eyelids drooping, biting her lips with a look of anger, which, by the way, in no wise detracted from her beauty; then, all at once, with a charmingly mutinous movement of the head, she smiled, drew nearer to me, and, rapidly slipping a ring on my finger, made a sign common, it seems, to all countries. She

laid her finger on her smiling lips; then, running to the cushions piled up near the embroidery-frame, she posed on them like a swallow, and, taking the lyre in her arms, began a song I can never forget.

"Oh, that crystal voice! that strange, unreal music! that fantastic and yet delicious melody! You spoke just now of the song of the sirens, my dear Stephen,— what siren ever sang as mine did then? Looking at her, listening to her, I felt myself living in an unknown world. A singular joy, mixed with a nameless melancholy, suffused my whole being. I could have wished to listen to it forever, or to die, listening to it. The tears rose to my eyes involuntarily; I was transported, and yet I was sad.

"She looked at me, while shedding these exquisite notes across the grotto, and it seemed to me that the rays of her eyes brought the fantastic notes to me. Opposite to her, one of the walls appearing to be of glass, I could distinguish a light-green, like that of the sea-water; I got a glimpse of large bodies passing one another in this transparent wall, attracted, retained like myself, by the magic song. Unable longer to endure inaction, I raised myself on my couch, when the old man, returning noiselessly to my side, laid his hand heavily on my shoulder, and offered me a cup of chased gold, filled with a beverage with an aromatic odour.

"I was about to refuse it, when, at a word from

the old man, the young girl rose, came towards me as lightly as a shadow, and, with a smile on her lips, offered me the cup. I drank it at a draught. The beverage was of a peculiar but very agreeable taste. No sooner had I swallowed it than I fell back on my cushions as if paralyzed. The young girl began to sing again. Everything whirled round me, — the grotto, its inhabitants, its furniture, the great, strange fishes which passed to and fro near the transparent wall. I fancied I saw the faces of friends bending over my couch, — yours, my mother's, Hélène's, — I shut my eyes to escape from the sensation of vertigo. The crystal voice seemed to die away in the distance. Once more I lost consciousness.

"When I came to myself the morning sun was sparkling on the waves. I was alone. An imperceptible speck in the midst of the vast blue. Firmly lashed to an empty barrel, I floated at random in mid-Atlantic. I spent two days and two nights like that, in a state between waking and sleeping, tortured by heat and thirst during the day, my limbs stiff and cold by night. I should have died without being able to move if a French mail-boat from La Plata had not chanced to pick me up. They brought me here, took care of me, and I should have been well, I believe, long before now, if I had not been devoured with a longing which you will easily under-

stand, and which consumes me like a burning fever, to see my young Undine again."

Doctor Patrice listened, at first with surprise, and then with uneasiness, to the midshipman's strange story. Nothing was more natural than that he should, under the influence of a hallucination, caused by fever, exposure to the sun's rays, thirst, and faintness, have dreamed of all these adventures; but, that he persisted in the hallucination, and that he, in good faith, believed all that he said, was a very serious matter, and inspired him with grave fears as to his mental condition. At first, trying to laugh him out of it, and then speaking very seriously to him, Patrice exerted himself to bring his young friend to a more rational state of mind. But all in vain; René refused to abate an inch of anything he had said. He had *seen* the grotto, the old man, the young girl, and, what was more, he was firmly resolved to see them again.

He would die in the attempt, if need were, but find them again he must and would; he would again hear that fairy music, that siren's song which had bewitched him. No reasoning of Patrice's could shake his determination; on the contrary, it only seemed to confirm it.

"My dear friend," said the doctor, at last, fairly angry, "allow me to give you a bit of advice. It is to keep carefully quiet about all this beautiful adven-

ture, if you do not wish to be sent straight to Charenton! How can you expect people in their senses to believe for one moment in such wild tales?"

"I have no intention of confiding them to any one whatever, you excepted," cried René, not less exasperated. "But, since you are so clever, wait, do me the favour to explain to me whence this ring comes, if it was not Undine that gave it to me.

CHAPTER III.

THE RING.

René Caoudal held out to the doctor his left hand, on which glittered a pearl with a superb setting. Stephen Patrice sat silent for a long time, his eyes riveted on the ring, puzzled, perplexed, with a hundred contradictory theories chasing one another through his brain. Although reason and common sense seemed on the side of doubt, he felt sure, in his character of physician, that René was not delirious. That he was speaking in his sleep could not for a moment be admitted, or that he was inventing the story; his frankness and loyalty to his friend were too thoroughly understood. But over and above the moral testimony of his young friend, there remained this strange token — this ring — which, even in ordinary circumstances, would have struck the most indifferent observer. The unique beauty of the pearl constituted a mystery in itself.

Whence came it? Its purity, its shape, its size, its incomparable perfection, proved it to be a royal jewel, a historic ornament of priceless value, which

could not have been stolen and concealed without a noise being made about it, much less worn by the thief, without being very quickly traced. It must have been celebrated, described minutely in the archives of some old mansion. The mounting was, if possible, more marvellous than the pearl. Cleopatra herself could not have dissolved and swallowed one more choice. Patrice was somewhat of a relic-hunter, like many others in these modern times; but he had, in a degree that few others can have, that artistic sense so common among children in his birthplace, the south of France, where it seems as if sculpture, painting, music, singing, eloquence, and the *belles-lettres* grow spontaneously. He instinctively recognized a work of art, and experience had taught him to class it with certainty, to attribute to it, without hesitation, a date, a school, a country. But here, with this *chef-d'œuvre* in miniature before him, he was completely nonplussed. Was it Greek art? Doubtless. But Greek, strictly speaking, like the words of the young girl and the old man, which sounded like Greek to René, "though he did not understand a word," it certainly was not. He had never seen this style of ornamentation anywhere. It did not belong to the dawn of Grecian art, nor to its meridian, nor to its decline; he could find none of the essential features of the Doric, Ionic, Corinthian or Neo-Greek schools. He could not give a name

to the marvellously chiselled faces in the setting right and left of the imperial pearl.

No animal, no bird, no kind of fossil reembodied by science was represented here. The chimera, that strange creation of the ancient imagination, could not have suggested the design, for the singular feature of it was the expression, even more than the form, of the face. Whether it was the likeness of a veritable creature, or the capricious symbol of an obsolete creed, it was impossible to say. The material, of which the mounting was composed, was another subject of perplexity. It was impossible to decide whether it was metal, wood, or stone. One would judge it to be metal. But was it gold — silver — platinum? No. An unknown combination? Perhaps. It resembled nothing he had ever seen. It was altogether an enigma. Between the artist that had conceived it and those who at the moment contemplated it there was an abyss,— an abyss of time, of space, of religion, of thought, of genius, of race, of language, of manners. That was evident.

"One might think that it had fallen from another planet," said the doctor, involuntarily.

"You think so!" said René, "I felt sure I had n't dreamt it. But whether I was inclined to believe or disbelieve it, *of one thing I am now perfectly certain,* — that what I have told you of my doings has been

seen and lived; I am as certain of it as I am of my accident on board the *Hercules*, and of my own identity. There! you may say what you like to the contrary. If I had any doubts, what can one say in answer to this tangible proof?"

"I don't know," said the doctor, thoughtfully.

"If only there were an inscription," added René, turning the ring about.

"An inscription! At the time in which this jewel was engraved I should be surprised to hear if they had recourse to our means of writing. Believe me, the arrangement of these faces constituted in itself a phrase legible to her for whom the ring was destined."

"To her for whom it was destined," repeated René, in a dreamy voice. "Ah, if you had but seen her, Stephen, you would no longer be surprised at the ring, wonderful as it is!"

"Possibly," said the doctor, nodding his head; "but, if I may say all I think about it, I should not like to see you musing too much about these experiences of yours. I do not pretend to explain that which I do not understand, and I do not deny that which is beyond me. There are mysteries that may be good and safe to sound; but this does not appear to be one of them. Siren or mortal, goddess or daughter of the Evil One, I do not admire your goddess with her mysterious beverages and her enig-

matical hospitality. Take my advice; put this ring away somewhere, or, better still, throw it into the sea, like the ancient who must have done so long ago, as a propitiatory offering to the gods; turn your back resolutely on these reminiscences which can only trouble your brain; cease to look into an unknown sphere, and fix your thoughts on things nearer home."

"Never!" cried the midshipman, indignantly. "Never! I? How can I forget this vision? No, my friend, I would not if I could. Look here! You speak of throwing it away and yet you are fascinated by it; you can't take your eyes from it; your hand is held out, in spite of yourself, to take it again. Never mind, the power which ordains that I shall find these mysterious beings again, the attraction which draws me towards them, is more imperious than you imagine. I *must* see them again and their submarine home. I *must* learn their secret, and obtain their confidence, so that I may establish communication with them."

"You *must*, above all, get up your strength," said the doctor, a little alarmed at this outbreak of excitement. "You should go to your mother and get better. Do you not see that all you have gone through has tried you severely, and, before attempting any fresh adventures, it will be necessary to get a little flesh on your bones?"

"That is true," said René, seriously. "To succeed in any enterprise whatever, one must first make provision in the shape of health and strength. I have a good mind to ask for leave, and to get away to 'The Poplars,' as soon as I am free."

"'The Poplars!'" repeated the doctor, in a melancholy tone. "Ah, René! how is it possible that any other image can efface the one you will find there?"

"What," said the middy, in an amused tone, "are you going to take part with the rest? You mean Hélène. How many times shall we have to beg our friends not to try to make us happy in spite of ourselves!"

"Your mother would be so pleased to call her daughter."

"But that matter is settled," said René, laughing. "Don't you see that it is absolutely impossible? Even if I could adorn with idealistic virtues the playfellow with whom I have grown up, with whom I have exchanged hard knocks on the head, and uncomplimentary home-truths, I dare not propose such a thing to her. Poor Hélène! she deserves a better fate than to be forced into a distasteful marriage. But, happily, she is not the sort of girl to allow any one to choose for her. And besides," added he, not without a spark of malice, "unless I am much mistaken, she will not have to go far to find an admirer far more satisfactory than I."

"By the way," said the doctor, abruptly changing the subject, "have you heard from Kermadec?"

"Certainly," said Caoudal. "The lad was allowed to see me as soon as he arrived at the hospital. He has even more need of rest and change than I. Do you know what I 've been thinking of? To take him with me to 'The Poplars.' He is alone in the world. Mother and Hélène know him through my letters, and I am sure that he would enjoy himself there."

"A capital idea," said the doctor. "If it were not in your service that he was wounded, it is not for want of wishing it. His one grief was at having survived you, as he thought, and to have done nothing to save you. You have made a devoted friend there."

"With very little trouble, I am sure. But the friendship is reciprocated. Kermadec has rare qualities, but the simplicity of a child. His *naïveté* and credulousness expose him to the worst influences."

"Those he will meet at 'The Poplars' can only be of the very best," said the doctor. "It is an understood thing, then. With his consent, which will not be difficult to get, we will ask for a double furlough. You go to recruit your strength together in the country air, and I will find time to pay a flying visit to 'The Poplars.' Do you know that yesterday I was

ordered to serve on anything but a cheerful errand? — the mission of going to inform your mother—"

"That her René had served as breakfast for the crabs?" said the midshipman, in a tone which belied the levity of his words. "Poor mother! Bah! Let us think no more of that. It is all over now. Make haste and get your furlough, and come and join us as soon as you can."

CHAPTER IV.

"THE POPLARS."

A FORTNIGHT later, on a smooth lawn in the beautiful grounds of "The Poplars," gently sloping towards the banks of the Loire, might have been seen a party of young girls in light dresses, and young men in striped flannels, engaged in a game of tennis. At a little distance in the background, near a red brick house, which had no pretension to be called a mansion, but which was of the simple and beautiful proportions of a comfortable modern dwelling, the older people were chatting round a tea-table. The mistress of the house, with her sweet face, and beautiful white hair, was occupied in paying hospitable attention to the wants of everybody. Madame Caoudal was radiant. She had her René with her, the object of her continual thoughts, her pride, her hope, the only one spared to her of all those dearest to her.

By a happy chance the cruel extremes of mourning and of joy had been spared her motherly heart. No one had been in a hurry to impart to the poor widow the death of her only son; so that she heard,

at the same time, of his accident and of the unexpected turn of fortune which restored him to her. Even with this happy *dénouement*, she had been much shaken, and her young favourite and counsellor, Hélène, had much difficulty in cheering and comforting her. The tearful mother had exclaimed against the cruel sea, which had robbed her of so much, and which would hardly let her keep her only son. But Hélène had hastened to point out to her that René was, after all, safe and sound, and, for that matter, to die in bed is less glorious than at sea (witness those neighbours of theirs upon whom their roof had suddenly fallen one night), and that it was all the greater pleasure to see him again after his terrible adventure. Whether her reasoning was bad or good, it succeeded in raising her aunt's spirits; and, moreover, when she saw her René again, the best and handsomest son in the world, according to the excellent woman, she forgot her troubles. Tall, athletic, with a proud poise of the head, a martial bearing, frank and commanding eyes, his movements supple and graceful, René Caoudal was, in truth, a fine young sailor; one to satisfy the most exacting motherly pride. He returned, it is true, somewhat thin and pale, but that did not make him the less interesting to the young folks assembled to do him honour. On the contrary, among the tennis players, there was a remarkably increased assiduity in according him a

gracious welcome. But apart from the ordinary courtesy due from him to all the guests as son of the house, not one of them could flatter herself that she received particular attention from him. In vain the freshest of toilets had been put in requisition; in vain the most flattering words and rippling laughter had been discharged at him; they read in his preoccupied look, his voice, his gestures, in his manner altogether, a sort of absent-mindedness.

"He is n't like the René that he used to be," said little Félicie Arglade, between two blows of her racquet. "He is changed somehow on the voyage! He has no eyes or ears for any one but Hélène."

"After such terrible dangers," put in Doctor Patrice, quietly, "with whom should he wish to talk but his cousin, his old playmate?"

"For my part, I have never believed in these marriages between cousins," said Félicie, in a still quieter voice.

"But why are you in such a hurry to marry them?" inquired Mademoiselle Luzan, a tall, fair, sweet looking girl with a grave expression. "If I know Hélène, M. Caoudal is the last person in the world it would enter her head to marry."

"Why are they always whispering in corners then?" retorted Félicie, somewhat softened.

"They are not whispering!" protested Mademoiselle Luzan; "they are chatting confidentially. And

what is there remarkable in that? Do you not know that M. Caoudal has just narrowly escaped death? Would n't you, if you were Hélène, be anxious to know every detail of his adventure?"

In reality, without any one being able to accuse them of *whispering*, as Félicie said, it was evident that Hélène and René had plenty to say to each other; and it was not, in truth, surprising that those who were not in their confidence should infer something strange. And how came it that Madame Caoudal, who had heard the whole story from him, and Stephen Patrice, who had heard it first, were neither of them recipients of these later confidences? Why was Madame Caoudal so radiant and Doctor Patrice so doleful? Was it that one of them saw the realization of her hopes, and the other, that which he had so long feared?

"This accident has touched their hearts and drawn them together," said the good lady. "Sometimes good comes out of evil."

"Undine will have to give way to Hélène," thought the doctor, sighing. "Well, so much the better! It would n't do to play the part of the dog in the manger, and one ought to rejoice in one's friends' happiness." They were both a little hasty in their conclusions.

The subject of these confidences between the cousins, which they pursued in the woods, at the

river bank, in the drawing-room, and at tennis, was the inexhaustible discussion of the details of René's adventures. On his return home, in the midst of the excitement, and the tearful joy of his mother, he had not been able to restrain himself from telling the whole story to her and to his cousin. For the subject had been tacitly ignored between him and the doctor, Caoudal having felt that his friend, if not hostile or sceptical, showed at least marked repugnance to encouraging him to speak of it.

As time went on, he became more and more animated and possessed by it, and, as the need of speaking and acting became more imperious, he showed that his heart was filled with thoughts of his mysterious acquaintances. Madame Caoudal appeared not incredulous, but displeased, cold, and even severe; she begged him seriously never to mention the subject in her presence again. Hélène never said a word, but her sparkling eyes spoke volumes; and when René, disappointed and perplexed, sought support and sympathy from her, she made him a sign to change the subject. Later, when they were seated under the great poplars which gave the name to their home, she explained her attitude:

"No need to torment auntie with the account of this wonderful adventure, or to let her brood over the projects that I understand," said she. "You know what a grudge she bears to the sea; it is

like a personal hatred between her and the liquid element. I believe she really thinks it a cursed power for evil. After the great sacrifice which she made in allowing you to enter the navy, we ought not to distress her any more than can be helped. If she believed, if it were possible for her to realize, that the depths of the sea, as well as its immensity, attract and claim you, that you feel called to the perilous honour of exploring unknown, mysterious, it may be deceptive regions, she, poor, dear soul, could not live. Spare her that distress.

"She has forbidden you to speak to her of such things. Obey her implicitly. As for me, I enter henceforth into all your plans; you know I have always shared your ambitions. Sometimes, nay often, I dream that I, too, pursue the glorious career of a sailor; I feel through my hair the vivifying air of the vast expanse; I fancy myself commanding a vessel; I see myself facing, with our brave seamen, the fury of the gale, landing on unknown islands, discovering new plants, new animals, new wonders, changing the aspect of geographical charts—and I wake—Hélène Rieux, as before!

"Do not think that I complain of my lot! But I admire and revere the glorious profession of my grandfather, of my uncle, and of yourself, and I shall be as proud of your exploits as if they were my own. All this is enough to show you that for

these projects, still unformed, still indistinct, you should not seek any confidant except myself. You cannot be too careful. One only understands perfectly what one loves; and I feel strongly, myself, that nothing but a peculiar, hereditary influence could induce me to believe unhesitatingly and with absolute certainty in your veracity. Like other people, I see much that is incredible in your adventure, and yet I believe in it. That which convinces me is not, as with Stephen, my confidence in your good faith, the conviction of your clear-headedness, or even the proof of the ring. No, it is 'the eye of faith' *voilà tout.* It seems to me that it must be; because when one is a born explorer, one goes straight at the discovery; because you have been called to see that which others could not see. In short, I believe, because I believe!"

Nothing could be more satisfactory than a confidant of this sort, and René was not less anxious to tell than she to listen. Away with the false conclusions of Madame Caoudal, of Dr. Patrice and of other friends! Hélène and René, like accomplices, continually felt the need of some mysterious confabulation. Either René had omitted to give in detail some one perfection of his goddess, or else Hélène had some new hypothesis to suggest, or wished to be told over again some forgotten circumstance. And, above all, there was the increasing importance of the question:

How to find the enchanting abode of these august personages again? How to find the time, the means, of attempting it? How to do all without awakening any suspicion on the part of Madame Caoudal? Hélène was firmly resolved on two points: to spare René's mother all uneasiness, all useless anxiety; and to encourage, as far as lay in her power, that which she considered to be the fulfilment of a duty, a chosen mission.

CHAPTER V.

THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN.

RENÉ was too clear-headed, and had been too long accustomed to weigh things in his mind with mathematical accuracy, not to have endeavoured to account for his immersion and subsequent adventure by simple and natural causes. He started with the following premises: First, I am not the sport of a hallucination, since I have in my possession a priceless and unique ring. Second, The old man and the young girl whom I saw in the wonderful grotto were not phantoms, because there are no such things as phantoms. Third, They are living beings, placed, by some combination of circumstances of which I am ignorant, in extraordinarily peculiar conditions of existence, at some hundreds of feet beneath the surface of the ocean, since the marine charts show in this region of the Atlantic a depth of not more than one thousand feet. And the habitation of these real and living, but abnormal beings? Clearly a grotto, or series of grottoes, extending under the sea, and borrowing the necessary respir-

able air from air-holes on the top of some rocks on a neighbouring island.

Such was the only reasonable conclusion he could arrive at. And it brought him by an easy transition to the question as to whether chance had not put him in the track of a great discovery, or at least of a great historical verification,—that of the ancient continent, now lost sight of under the ocean, which the tradition of the earliest times locates between Africa and South America; a sort of huge island, formerly analogous to Australia, long since submerged, and of which Madeira, Teneriffe, the Azores, and the Antilles are the only remains or landmarks now visible. As to the existence of this Atlantic continent, on the other side of the Pillars of Hercules (that is to say the Straits of Gibraltar), and of its disappearance during some great cataclysm, the historians, geographers, and philosophers of antiquity are all agreed. Plato speaks of it often in his writings. He gives us the source of the tradition which he hands down, and which is assuredly not without authority: it was his granduncle Solon, the Athenian legislator, who received from the Egyptian priests of Saïs a description of *Atlantide*, as they called this mysterious land.

To what branch of the human race did the Atlantes belong? On this point, tradition is less clear. Some have thought that they were an indig-

enous race which probably invaded Europe (that is to say Greece), and were opposed by the feeble resistance of the Pelasgi, the ancestors of the Greeks. Others believe, on the contrary, that Atlantide was a Greek colony, perhaps one of those founded by Jason and his companions on their search for the Golden Fleece. But all these writers are agreed in stating that Atlantide disappeared some thousands of years before the present era, and that the shallows, the banks of marine grass known by the name of "The Sea of Sargasses," the peaks and the islands of this region, are, in some sort, the ruins of a submerged continent.

So much for the summary, but positive, indications gleaned by René from history. He knew, moreover, that the navigators of the fifteenth century believed in the existence of Atlantide. Christopher Columbus, for one, endeavoured to find his way to the Indies by going westward, with the conviction that he was sure to find, at various distances apart, the islands surviving from the great continent, which would serve him as places where he might put into port by the way. The discovery of the Azores and the Antilles justified, in a great measure, this idea, based, as it was, on traditional geography.

All the soundings made during the last half century, notably those by Admiral Fleuriot de Langle, in the part of the Atlantic between the twelfth and

sixtieth degrees west longitude, show, moreover, a region literally "paved" with shallows, reefs, and sand-banks. In short, the actual conclusions drawn from the physiography of the globe forbade him to doubt any longer the possibility, and even the probability, of these facts relative to Atlantide and its disappearance. Considerable changes have been and still are produced, under our own eyes, in the configuration of sea and land, such as the sundering of the land at the Straits of Dover, which is of comparatively modern date. The coast of Normandy, too, was encroached upon by the sea, shortly before the Carlovingian era, and nothing was left above high-water mark but the Channel Islands, and, even in our own day, the Island of Santorin, in the middle of the Mediterranean, has disappeared from view.

Then new islands have appeared, while, in the far east, frightful inundations have changed, in a few days, the physiognomy of the Japanese Archipelago. It is well known, also, that America was in primitive times much less extensive than it is now; that the enormous basin of the Amazon, that of La Plata, Florida, Patagonia, Louisiana, and Texas, are lands but recently abandoned by the ocean. In a word, there are endless proofs in evidence of the fact that the surface of the globe is ceaselessly changing, sometimes by the slow and continued action of winds

and waves, sometimes by the sudden effect of some great local disturbance.

René was able, therefore, without imprudence, to admit as certain the fact that an Atlantic country had been submerged beneath the ocean, and to connect this historical known quantity with the indelible remembrance of his submarine sojourn near the Azores. The more he looked into the subject, the more sure he felt that the old man and the young girl were Atlantes, veritable Atlantes in flesh and blood, surviving the wreck of their country. How? By what mysterious means? By what refined artifices? By what superhuman power? He could not tell, and he would not risk useless hypotheses in this regard. But he was certain of one thing; what he had seen once he was determined to see again; to bring to light this mystery; to elucidate, perhaps, a great geographical problem.

Why not, after all? Why not embark voluntarily, systematically, and with his eyes open, on this voyage which a sea wave had already unconsciously accomplished for him? Why not descend once more of his own accord to the scene he had left in an inanimate condition, and come and go at his own pleasure? René made up his mind to attempt it. And so, as he was accustomed to do thoroughly what he did at all, he asked himself, to begin with, by what means he could exchange ideas with these

Atlantes, supposing he were fortunate enough to find them. At any price, he must avoid the blunder of knowing that they were discussing him, without being able to understand what they said. What language did they speak? The conviction was impressed more and more upon him that it was ancient Greek.

This conviction was corroborated by their surroundings, their furniture, by the character of their garb and their attitudes, and became a certainty one evening when he was talking to himself, aloud, about that which occupied his thoughts night and day. He had just mechanically articulated some of the sounds he remembered to have heard in the grotto: "*Pater, agathos, thugater.*" The next thing to do was to hunt up his old classic school-books, to open the Iliad and the Odyssey, and to search feverishly for these same words.

All at once scraps of Greek, long dormant in his memory, awoke from their sleep. The old roots of Claude Lancelot shone before him, in blazing characters, and he surprised himself muttering, as in former days: "*Pater*, father; *apater*, without a father; *agathos*, good, brave in war; *thugater*, the daughter is called —" Oh, charming roots! What delicious rhapsodies! How René enjoyed these phrases that he used to anathematize in his schoolboy days! He found out now what had

made the study of Greek so difficult, before he had heard the accent of his host and hostess,— musical cadences as different as could be from the stammering attempts at pronunciation at college. But, henceforth, he would know better. By comparing other words of the same order as those with whose rhythm his ears were familiar, he could form an approximate idea of the way to pronounce them, and from that he was able to proceed to other classes of words, related to the first in various directions. He soon got as far as creating for himself, in every instance, a system of accentuation, and, as the result was harmonious, he concluded that it must be the right one. At the same time, he threw himself, heart and soul, into the study of the vocabulary, of syntax and flexions of every kind. And, above all, he attacked the roots, those delightful roots, which are the key to the language, and of which Rollin justly says that they impart "an incredible facility to the intelligence of authors."

He was now always to be found, book in hand, repeating to himself one or other of these simple phrases: "*Meli*, honey, sweet to the taste. *Melissa*, mellifluous insect." He could not keep up these exercises without Hélène's remarking it. She wished to know what it was all about; René explained, and, forthwith, she also became enamoured of the study of Greek, and, like a gardener, busied

herself with these fascinating roots, and rivalled René himself in her ardent cultivation of them.

They never came across one another, without firing off a volley at each other. Greek seemed to be in the air. In the corridors, in the garden, in the field, the winged words flew about: "*Aazzô*, I breathe, I aspire, etc." So much so, that Kermadec, in his turn, wishing to imitate his officer in everything, and gifted, moreover, with a prodigious memory, caught the contagion. He was heard, muttering to himself, as he polished the copper pans: "*Agele*, great drove of oxen." Doctor Patrice, though protesting against it for form's sake, allowed himself to be attacked by the epidemic, and could not resist the satisfaction of showing that he had not entirely forgotten his classical studies. Madame Caoudal, alone, remained impervious to the general craze, and asked, throwing up her hands, what was the matter with them all, that they spoke from morning to night in such a language.

Meanwhile, René did not neglect the practical part of his programme. He surrounded himself with all the charts and documents which might help him to solve the problem. He had, on mature reflection, delayed his projects. The first question was, not to find associates, forces, materials necessary for the execution of so fantastic an enterprise; he must get an extension of leave and permission

from his mother to spend the time of that leave at sea. During this interval, he received his promotion to the rank of lieutenant. This was no more than his due, since, for the last year, his name had figured on the roll for promotion, for "distinguished services." The first and immediate effect of this promotion was to facilitate the accomplishment of his projects, and he obtained, without difficulty, the necessary three months' freedom.

Madame Caoudal's consent was more difficult to get. But what cannot one achieve with a little perseverance and diplomacy? Worked upon by Hélène, the good lady was induced to confess that, after all, if René wished to employ his leisure in taking a voyage of discovery on his own account, there was no reason why she should oppose it. The young officer now began with all speed to prepare the ways and means for his voyage. He had for the last three weeks been in regular correspondence with some one unknown to the rest of the household. The faithful Kermadec carried the letters to the post-office in the town. For this purpose he went continually backwards and forwards between Lorient and "The Poplars," proud of serving his officer, big with importance, ready to be cut in pieces sooner than betray a secret, about which, by the way, he knew nothing. It ceased to be a secret when, one morning, René, seating himself at the breakfast-

table, handed his mother an open letter, which he begged her to read. The Prince of Monte Cristo had invited him to spend a few weeks on board his yacht *Cinderella*, in order to discuss some new and curious ideas he had formed concerning the flora of the African coast. Everybody knew that the yacht *Cinderella* had been engaged for several years in sounding in shallow waters. It is a superb boat, commanded by the proprietor in person, and splendidly furnished for the researches he pursues. Many celebrated *savants* have received his hospitality on board the vessel, and have reported their explorations to the Academies, and registered them in the papers. An invitation to spend several weeks on board so illustrious a yacht could not fail to be considered by Madame Caoudal as a great compliment to her boy.

She certainly did sigh at thought of his sacrificing the rest which he seemed to need; but the satisfaction of knowing that René was about to distinguish himself in a pacific enterprise softened the pang of parting.

She therefore, without much persuasion, gave the required assent. A week later, the young lieutenant, escorted by Kermadec, took the train for Lisbon, where the *Cinderella* awaited him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE YACHT "CINDERELLA."

THE *Cinderella* (Proprietor and Commander Hereditary Prince Christian of Monte Cristo, the twenty-sixth of his name) was an auxiliary yacht of five hundred and thirty tons. She was schooner rigged, but had also a single screw with engines of three hundred and fifty horse-power, and carried sufficient coal to enable her to steam at full speed for twenty days. Her speed by steam in fair weather was about a dozen knots; but the speed could be considerably augmented by sailing when the weather was favourable. The exterior of the vessel showed a pointed hull, long and light, suggesting the motion of a well-bred horse. The fine proportions of her rigging, the perfect adjustment of her timbers, which enhanced a simplicity full of elegance, struck René's practised eye at the first glance, inclined though he was by his profession to despise mere pleasure boats as inferior productions. To all appearances, the crew, in its perfect discipline, was copied from that of a man-of-war. The young lieutenant noted with

satisfaction the frank and open faces of the men, an unfailing characteristic of men-of-war's men.

The planks of the deck shone with cleanliness and all the brass was as bright as gold. The officer who received the prince's guest was less satisfactory than the rest of the yacht. He introduced himself as Captain Sacripanti, second in command of the yacht. He was a little man, short and stout, with black hair shining with pomade, a showy necktie, a double watch-chain ornamented with lockets, and his fingers covered with rings; he looked in fact more like a Neapolitan valet than a seaman. His accent, too, was that of a flunkey. He was one of those people of doubtful origin, who speak very badly, and with a coarse voice, all the languages of the Mediterranean countries.

Bowing very low, and showing a double row of very white teeth, he offered to conduct the young lieutenant to the commander,—an offer at once accepted. On going aft, René passed, one after the other, a saloon, a smoking-room, a dining-saloon, and a library luxuriously furnished. His guide knocked discreetly at the door of a state-room. "Come in," cried a voice of thunder. The "second in command" slid open the door in its groove and effaced himself to allow René to pass. "Lieutenant Caoudal," he announced in a solemn voice. Upon this, a tall figure emerged from the depths of a

monumental arm-chair, and, throwing on a round table the newspaper which he was reading with the aid of eye-glasses, came, with outstretched hand, to greet him:

"My dear M. Caoudal, how pleased I am to see you!" he cried, effusively. And he pressed the young man's hand within his own, as if he were greeting a long-lost friend. He almost embraced him. Without manifesting any surprise, René expressed to him the pleasure he felt, on his side, at making the acquaintance of the Prince of Monte Cristo.

"Well! do you know, I see we shall get to be as thick as two thieves, upon my word," cried the prince in an explosive manner, when René had finished speaking. "To begin with, I must tell you I am a very outspoken person. If people please me, I tell them so to their faces. If not, — well, I am equally plain with them. And I like you, — I like you very much. I am positively enchanted to make your acquaintance; enchanted to have you on board for a time; enchanted to find that our work interests you, and that you wish to take part in it. I hope you will enjoy being with us," continued he with great volubility, paying not the slightest attention to the few polite words the lieutenant felt bound to utter. "If you are not satisfied with anything, you must tell me so, plainly, and I will endeavour to

alter, — not my yacht, that would not be practicable, but, at least, I would see that things are rearranged to suit your taste. I wonder how you would like to look over my little wooden shoe, as I call my yacht. Ha! ha! ha!"

Falling in with his host's noisy, hilarious mood, René declared that he was quite ready to look over the "shoe." The prince, putting on a huge cap, led the way, and showed him every corner of it, from the deck to the hold, not omitting any detail. René was bound to admit that everything, outside and in, was perfect of its kind. Nothing was wanting which could be useful for the scientific work that the prince had undertaken; photographic studio, carpenter's shop, forge, physical and chemical laboratory, all seemed admirably organized. Two or three dozen workmen, directed by foremen, occupied these various workshops. The prince said in his guest's ear, in a stentorian whisper, that they were the pick of jolly fellows, and he "liked them extremely; otherwise he would tell them so squarely, and show them the way out."

His highness's appearance was truly extraordinary. Physically, he was a veritable Colossus; tall, broad in proportion, — aldermanic proportion, — very red in the face, with prominent eyes and a large aquiline nose, or, rather, enormous beak, which gave him a fantastic resemblance to a parrot. He had a

ringing voice, and gesticulated a great deal; his laugh was Homeric in its amplitude; and his manners, as we have seen, were exuberantly cordial. He affected an openness, a frankness bordering on bluntness. An incessant talker, he used a hundred words where ten would have served. But what struck René at the outset was the philosophical disdain he professed on all occasions for the sovereign rank to which he was born. It is true his principality consisted of nothing more than an islet, two or three hundred acres in extent, whose chief industry and sole source of revenue was an argentiferous lead mine, worked by seven or eight hundred convicts, which he let to a neighbouring nation. If he was to be believed, he cared for nothing in the world but personal merit. He affirmed that the meanest scavenger, if intellectually endowed, was worth more to him than an emperor on his throne. One would have thought that he wished, by this ostentatious display of principles, to excuse himself for having been born some fifty years previously heir to a large fortune as well as a princely crown. At least he had the good taste to spend a good third of it in useful scientific work.

"I look upon myself as a steward," he volunteered. "My fortune is not my own. I only manage it for the benefit of those who have none. As to my name! bah! what is that? As the immortal Shakespeare says, 'A rose by any other name would smell as

sweet.' I protest to you that I attach no importance whatever to it, and that I would as soon go by the name of Big John, as Monte Cristo." But he never missed an opportunity of reminding one of the twelve hundred years of ancestors more or less authentic. In five minutes René knew him through and through. Ridiculous though he was, he could not dislike him, and the prospect of spending a few weeks on board so charming a vessel was not to be despised. The prince insisted on himself showing him to his cabin. It was most elegant and commodious, and opened on the library. He begged the young fellow to consider himself at home, and to tell him if he would like anything altered to suit his convenience. René assured him in all sincerity that he had never been so comfortably lodged, and they went up on deck the best friends in the world.

The object of the present voyage of the *Cinderella* was to sound some of the Atlantic shoals, and René lost no time in asking to be shown the apparatus to be used for the purpose. The investigation had an interest for him little dreamt of by Monte Cristo, who took him at once to the place where it was standing ready for use. It was an enormous block of lead, weighing twenty tons; round its upper extremity was coiled a solid rope of measuring silk, which Monte Cristo pronounced, not without pride, to be five hundred yards in length.

"You see," said the prince, much pleased at being able to play the showman, "our monstrous plummet is hollowed out at the base, and has a coating of grease. When it has lain long enough at the bottom it is slowly drawn up by means of this windlass; it reappears covered with shells, gravel, grasses, *débris* of all sorts which it picks up in dragging along at the bottom of the sea. It is by studying the nature of this *débris* with the magnifying-glass that we draw our conclusions concerning the kinds of vegetable and animal life (often new to us) concealed in these beds under water."

"Indeed!" said René, surprised and disappointed, "have you no other method of research?"

"Why, no, my dear fellow! What more would you have than a plummet like mine? What do you find defective in it?"

"Nothing in itself, certainly. It is a superb plummet, but, if I may be permitted to make a suggestion, it is that another machine, somewhat akin to it, be used for examining the sea-bottom."

"But what sort of machine would you suggest? Would you have me send a photographic camera a thousand feet under water? And by what means, may I ask?"

"A camera? no."

"What, then?"

"A man! Yes, I confess, sir, I should not have

asked to join in your researches, if I had not indulged the hope of going myself to the sea-bottom. I cling to the hope of seeing, with my own eyes, what goes on down there, and all the shells that could possibly attach themselves to the largest plummet in the world would tell me absolutely nothing! The least glance in person would serve my purpose."

"He, he!" and the prince went off in an explosion of laughter. "I dare say, my young friend; I, too, should like extremely to see, with my own eyes, what is going on among the fishes. But just one thing stands in my way, you see. It is impossible, simply impossible!"

"Why impossible?"

"For a very good reason; namely, that we make our soundings at such depths that we could not possibly provide our divers with a respiratory tube long enough, and, if we sent our men to explore the depths, what steps could we take to provide them with air to breathe?"

René reflected a minute before replying.

"It is clear that the difficulty of providing respirable air is the only thing that stands in the way," said he, at last. "Well, if we cannot make a tube sufficiently long, we must think of some other expedient, that 's all."

"Hum, ha! let us see," said the prince, crossing his arms on his ample chest.

"Look here; it will be necessary, according to my idea, to contrive a special diving apparatus; an apparatus for shoal soundings. If only a supply of respirable air, sufficient to last for three or four hours, could be assured to the diver! Round the suspension cable a telephonic wire should be coiled, which should keep the explorer in communication with those on deck, so that he could be drawn up as soon as he gives the word, and, in case he gave no sign of life after a given interval, he could be drawn up, without losing a minute, by means of a steam-engine."

"Do you know, that is the most ingenious plan I ever heard of!" cried the prince, enchanted, "only we have no such diving apparatus."

"That is true."

"What, then?"

"We must invent one. Have n't you here, on board, complete workshops, and first-rate workmen?"

"Certainly; there are none better than mine, I flatter myself."

"Very well; with your permission, I will at once set to work in the library, and begin to work out my plan of a diving apparatus, and I hope, before long, to make drawings exact enough for your workmen to construct a most satisfactory one."

"If you do that, I really must embrace you," cried the prince, enthusiastically, foreseeing, already,

the reports that would be addressed to the learned societies, and the interest that would be connected with his name. "If you succeed, upon my word! I would willingly give you a year or two's revenue of my principality."

"I would not ask for so much as that," said René, laughingly; "only allow me to take my first journey in it alone, when it is completed, and to choose *myself* the site of my soundings, at least, to begin with."

"Assuredly, my dear boy. You shall do just as you wish. When will it suit you to begin?"

"As soon as we set out."

"Bravo! And you wish to sail towards —?"

"I particularly wish to explore the region of the Sargassian Sea. When we arrive at the point where 25° E. longitude crosses 36° N. latitude, we will make a halt, and proceed to sound."

"Oh! Ah! You have decided ideas; that is clear. And what do you expect to discover at that exact spot? Plenty of driftwood, no doubt. What else?"

"Experience has taught me, indeed, that the sea is covered at that spot with a quantity of sea-wrack, which the *savants* call *fucus natans*, and our sailors, very aptly, *tropical grapes*, or gulf-wrack. It is a sea plant, the stalks of which terminate in watery bladders. But what does it matter? All that will only bore you, I fancy —"

"Indeed, your diving apparatus will disturb such a movable carpet. Well, sir, you have only to command. The library and the workmen are at your disposal, and I will at once give word as to our route."

And the prince went off, leaving his guest in a high state of satisfaction as seeing himself on the way to find his mysterious Undine. And, as the yacht weighed anchor and set sail, the young officer shut himself up in the library, where, thanks to considerable ability in drawing, and with the help of the necessary technical books, Indian ink, coloured crayons, compass, and drawing-board, he soon produced (on paper at least) the apparatus of which he dreamed. He made more than twenty copies before succeeding to his satisfaction, and, at last, handed to the workmen a plan which seemed to him to unite all the wished-for conditions, and, under his directions, the work was carried out in the workshop.

The prince had not overrated the cleverness of his men. They were experienced, practical workmen, who were fully qualified to carry out difficult instructions. The diving apparatus designed by René was an immense circular chest, about seven hundred cubic feet in size, and, for ballast, was weighted at its base with rather more than two tons of lead. This base was furnished with steel braces, bound by strong bands of steel to suspension grapnels;

and these, in their turn, were attached to tackle placed on either side of the vessel. A set of pulleys and the steam capstan ought to lower and raise the apparatus at will. The submersible chest or diving-bell, to give it a simpler name, was provided with windows and small port-holes of thick but perfectly transparent glass, which would allow a ray of electric light to shine in all directions, and light up the surrounding waters. The source of light was a movable lamp, hung from the ceiling, and fed for several hours by an accumulator. This accumulator was fixed in the framework of a soft sofa, which formed, with a work-table, two easy chairs, and an ordinary chair, the furniture of the cabin. Near to the sofa was concealed, at the bottom of a large china vase, a bottle with two small tubes, which emitted automatically a small quantity of oxygen, when the button setting it in motion was pressed.

Opposite to it, and under the cover of a second vase, was placed a metallic bath, which René, without saying anything to any one, reserved, to be filled with barytic water. It is well known that protoxyde of barytes or baryta, discovered by the German chemist, Scheele, has the remarkable property of absorbing, with extreme precision, the carbonic acid of the atmosphere. The young lieutenant was convinced that a bath of baryta, mixed at need with a slight addition of oxygen, ought to be sufficient to

maintain for many hours the respirable properties of the seven hundred cubic feet of air, and experience would justify his theory.

Thus equipped, carefully varnished, and waxed, the submersible chamber had the appearance of a large and elegant officers' cabin. It was made still more complete by four india-rubber bags symmetrically placed at the bottom, and rounded off, like the fingers of a glove; the bags would allow of a human hand, guided by the electric light, to feel and seize hold of specimens of gravel, sand, or submarine plants. Specimens picked up thus, and brought into the interior of the chamber, should surely have a better chance of arriving safe and sound at the surface than by the primitive method of laying a coat of grease on the traditional plummet. Finally, in order to achieve the realization of the programme René had traced, a telephonic wire inclosed in a thick covering, like that of the suspending cable, kept the diver in constant communication with the chief mate, posted at the capstan. Any appeal could be immediately heard, every order executed without possibility of mistake. So that even if it should prove less manageable, and less sure than an ordinary apparatus, the new diving-bell would, in reality, be more supple and obedient than any previously in use.

Once begun, the work advanced with the greatest

speed. René, giving himself up entirely to the work, showed an ardour which astonished and charmed his host. By nature and by training the prince was indisposed to work, or personal effort of any kind; and though, as a man desirous of being thought up to date, and with modern, enlightened views, he was ambitious of scientific laurels, it would never have entered his head to win them except by proxy. To toil and struggle in order to extort one revelation, more or less, from Nature, so tenacious of her secrets, was all very well for "poor devils born and reared in the obscure multitude." To employ the capital he hardly knew how to spend, in enterprises which would bring him honour without robbing him of one minute of his "*far niente*," certainly!—but to give himself personally to it, that was quite another affair. So that he was greatly surprised to see René, at an age when one thinks more of amusement than of helping the world's progress, handling plane and saw, like a workingman, plunging his hands without hesitation into pitch or nauseous glue, working away as if his daily bread depended on it. He enjoyed the novelty of it, and, won by the fire and activity of his young collaborator, he indulged the liveliest hope of seeing his name cited with eulogies by learned societies and venerated by future generations.

Meanwhile the yacht arrived at the quiet waters

of the mysterious sea, and for the last eight hours they had contented themselves with tacking about, while the workmen put the last touches to their work. How often, leaning over the stern-railing, had René endeavoured to pierce the gray-green depths! Was it indeed here that this enigmatical creature breathed, whose clear voice still vibrated in the depths of his being? Was it here, under this sombre wall with its shining surface, under this formidable volume of dark waters, that the young fairy lived, moved, and thought?

At night an irresistible force would draw René out from his cabin. He would lean his elbows on the rails, and, while the twinkling stars seemed to watch him, seek with greedy eyes to pierce the black waves often lit up with phosphorescent fires. Sometimes a ray of moonlight made him tremble! Was it she? Could it be her dazzling arms stretched out from the waters to beckon him?

One evening, towards midnight—was it a dream? was he asleep?—he thought he heard once more the song he never could forget. It was far, far away like the mournful cry of a bird gliding over the waters, fanned by the breeze. The impression was so strong that he sprang to his feet, and, with an irresistible impulse, responded by a musical phrase, a phrase thrown to the winds from his young warm voice, which sounded to him like a superhuman salu-

tation. But no sound came back to him this time. Doubtless he had been deceived, or his dream had taken the vividness of reality. He struck his forehead, and asked himself if he were mad; and the movement brought his ring into view. No! he was not dreaming! No! he was not mad, since the ring was still on his finger. And, at the idea that this ring linked him to the marvellous Undine, that by this link he was forced to seek her and to find her, he felt capable of daring anything.

Ah! he knew now why Ulysses had sealed the ears of his companions, when passing near the Cape of the Sirens. He had experienced a like charm, and he who had once heard the magic singing must and would hear it again, if it cost him his life!

CHAPTER VII.

THE JOURNAL OF A DIVER.

Every time there was an opportunity, that is to say whenever a steamer passed the *Cinderella*, René availed himself of it to send word to "The Poplars" that he was in full health of mind and body. All his letters were finished off by the one word: *Hope.* Hélène knew its meaning and thrilled in sympathy with him. Madame Caoudal and Doctor Patrice each interpreted the words according to their respective hopes and fears, and followed up the wrong scent, ingenious, as usual, in creating numberless proofs in confirmation of their illusion. The good lady had chosen Stephen as the confidant of the projects which had previously been discouraged by the attitude of Hélène and René; and now that she thought she saw the realization of her wishes, she felt triumphant, and could not refrain from speaking of her hopes, ten times a day at least, to the unfortunate doctor.

"Have you not remarked, doctor, how Hélène has improved in appearance these last few weeks?"

"It seems to me, madame, that she had nothing

to gain in that respect," declared Stephen, who had not waited till then to discover that she was the loveliest girl in the world.

"Yes, yes! But have n't you noticed? It dates from René's terrible adventure. Really one might call it quite a providential accident."

"Rather a violent providence!"

"Ah, how should any one know that better than I? But, however, now that all danger is over, one cannot but rejoice at the turn things have taken. The children were made for one another, any one can see that. It would be a sin to divide their property, too. Just think of it! Forty thousand acres held by one sole tenant! I have always considered that the property ought not to be divided. During the long minority of my two wards, I flatter myself that I have managed it as well as most guardians."

"Every one is agreed, madame, in recognizing the superiority of your administration."

"Well, you know, Stephen, how cruelly disappointed I should be if my little Hélène, brought up under my roof, whom I have cherished absolutely as if she were my daughter, were to leave; and that a stranger should take the first place in her affections."

"Is not that the common lot?"

"The common lot! It is very easy for you to say so! I should like to see you, when you have a

daughter of your own! How would you like any one to have the audacity to ask you to give her up? Ah, I have had plenty of applications for her hand! But to come back to what we were talking about, it is all happily arranged now, and I am relieved!"

"You consider that René and Hélène have come to an understanding?"

"Have n't you seen it? All the time my son was here they were inseparable. They always had something to say to each other; the most indifferent remarked it. Come, doctor, you must have perceived it like the rest?"

"A blind person might have seen it. They were, as you say, inseparable, but have they not always been so?"

"Ah! but it was much more so this time. And you, who are so observant, and have known them so long, it could not have escaped you. You have been here every time we have had news from René; well, each time she was radiant; that is the word, simply radiant!"

"So she was when her *fiancé* went away," said the doctor, thoughtfully, his natural penetration becoming clearer in spite of himself. "Is not that a symptom contrary to your conviction?"

"Ah! you cannot understand people who are governed by a passion for the sea!" cried the lady,

petulantly. "You did not know my sister-in-law. She had an heroic nature, capable of sacrificing her dearest and best without a murmur, in her country's service. She has bequeathed her spirit —"

"There is the more merit in making similar sacrifices, when one has not that passion."

"Oh, as for me, everybody knows that if I sacrifice myself, it is not without protestation!" said Madame Caoudal, laughing. "I am not one of the race of stoics. But Hélène is one of those who could smile on the altar of sacrifice. But, joking apart, she is a generous and courageous soul, worthy to be the wife of my René."

These conversations were repeated again and again. The excellent lady, thinking herself so perspicuous, was quite unaware of the amount of useless suffering she was inflicting on the unfortunate doctor in making him, perpetually, the confidant of her hopes. Others were less blind, and, if the doctor had overheard the confidential talk of two young girls, whose white dresses appeared and disappeared at the end of the lawn, between the great poplars, perhaps he would have carried a lighter heart back with him to his lonely home.

Hélène Rieux and Mademoiselle Luzan loved each other dearly, and, excepting the secrets that concerned other people, concealed nothing from each other.

The two girls looked charming under the summer sun, having, at the age of twenty, no fears for their healthy complexion from his rays, and presenting the traditional contrast of brunette and blonde, which, though it has long served to adorn the bindings of books and the lids of sweetmeat boxes, is none the less pleasant to look at. Bertha Luzan was tall and slender, with something noble and classical in her blue eyes, regular features, fair head, and statuesque arms. Hélène was dark, delicately formed, less tall, but equally graceful.

"There is that poor doctor going home, looking so melancholy," said Bertha.

"Well, you don't hold me responsible for that, do you?" said Hélène, rather impatiently, feeling as if a reproach underlay her friend's words.

"Shall I say what I think? I do not recognize your usual generosity in your treatment of him."

"Then what can I do to please you?"

"Acknowledge the delicate reserve of a man whom you honour," said Mademoiselle Luzan, gravely, "and who is the only one—"

"The only one—?"

"That you will ever marry," added Bertha, smiling.

"It will be in spite of himself, then," said Hélène. "Confess, now, that it would be impossible to manifest less eagerness than he does."

"As if you did not know as well as I, that it is your fortune that paralyzes him, to say nothing of your aunt's plans for you, which are no secret from any one."

"That would be a very good reason; reasonable enough for any one but Stephen, who has heard us a dozen times, René and me, explain ourselves clearly on that point. As to the mere accident of dowry or fortune, it is unworthy of such a man as he to attach such importance to it."

"Do not say so, Hélène," replied Mademoiselle Luzan, gently. "You cannot know how odious it would be to a proud man to appear calculating in such a matter."

"But if I do not believe he would be calculating, what does it matter what other people think?"

"Still, I think you ought to let him know."

"In other words, I am to make advances to him? Never! If he has n't the courage to overcome such a miserable obstacle, — well, we must remain apart. He is of no less value in my eyes for being without a fortune, and I feel no more inclined to propose marriage to him, than I should to no matter what great personage."

"Brave heart!" said Bertha, embracing her; "but take care, Hélène, don't be hard and unjust. He, whom you are keeping at a distance, is sadly misunderstood."

"Misunderstood? So be it!" said Hélène, decidedly. "What can I do?"

"It is a misunderstanding that a word could put right," said Bertha, dreamily to herself, and, without insisting any more, she came back to the subject on which they never disagreed, the cruise of the yacht *Cinderella* and the great work René was doing.

The very moment the two friends were discussing his plans and wishing him success, the young lieutenant was embarking on his first descent in the submarine cabin he had designed. Comfortably installed at his writing-table, over which was placed a chronometer, an aneroid barometer, a thermometer, and a dial-plate for registering the length of cable paid out by the steam capstan, he recorded with a steady hand his slightest impressions, that he might transmit them to his family. And the following is what was written on the first pages of the "Journal of a Diver:"

René's Journal.

"June 11th. 17 minutes past 12 P. M. Longitude, 24° 17′ 23″ East; Latitude, 30° 40′ 7″ North. Here I am, sealed up in my cell for my first descent. The fastenings of the door and of the port-holes appear to be quite water-tight. All is in order and everything in its place. I have poured into the tub thirty pints of water of baryta, the oxygen flagon is ready to act. The electric light is all one could wish. Off we go! I sound the telephone, and give the order to start: '*Reel off twenty-*

five yards! Au revoir, gentlemen'—It is done. The only sounds I hear are the steam-engine above my head, and the movement of the hand on the dial registering my descent; otherwise all is as smooth and insensible as can be wished. At the precise moment when the needle marks twenty-five yards, it stops. All is going capitally; I telephone that message, and receive in reply the echo of my host's sonorous congratulations. A rapid glance through each port-hole shows me clear green water all round me, excepting that through the roof I distinguish the keel of the yacht and its shadow. Not the slightest oozing at the joints; the caulkers of the *Cinderella* are first-rate, like all the workmen on board.

"12.20. Gave the order to pay out a hundred yards more cable.

"12.22. The needle points to one hundred and twenty-five, and stops. The water is opaque and dark. In the rays of electric light projected to larboard I see file past me huge fish, terrified by this submarine light. Telephoned: '*All going well. Pay out three hundred yards.*'

"12.28. The needle marks four hundred and twenty-five yards. Around me the water is black. Not a ray of sunlight can pierce the gruesome wall interposed between the atmosphere and my cell. Is it an illusion? It seems to me that the silence is more intense, more complete, more black, so to speak, than at the start. That is the only difference. The air of the room does not appear to have suffered any appreciable modification. The temperature is stationary. Telephoned: '*Pay out five hundred yards, slowly, ready to stop at the first call!*'

"12.36. Needle marks seven hundred and forty yards. Telephoned: '*Slow down the paying out of the cable, gently, and with attention!*'

"12.38. I did right to go slowly. A pretty rough shake informed me that I had reached the bottom. Telephoned: '*Stop!*' The order is executed in less than a twentieth of a second. The needle points to nine hundred and thirty-four yards. Thus, the descent has not taken more than twenty-one minutes. I feel the strange sensation of arriving on shore after a voyage, and finding dry land once more,—a singular illusion, truly, at a distance of one thousand yards below the surface! Can it be that the bottom of the sea is my real country, my home? Telephoned: '*All well! Have touched the bottom. Nine hundred and thirty-four yards.*' Answer: '*A volley of cheers.*' Replied: '*Thanks; but leave me to explore the country.*'

"The floor of my cabin is horizontal, proving that the diving-bell has grounded on a flat surface. Indeed, the electric light dispersed to right and left, and before and behind, reveals a bed of sand and calcareous *débris*. Everything is dead, bleached, and motionless. Nothing in the least resembling nursery tales or poets' songs. Nothing could be less like the famous dream of Clarence.

> "'Methought I saw a thousand fearful wrecks;
> A thousand men that fishes gnawed upon;
> Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,
> Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
> All scattered at the bottom of the sea:
> Some lay in dead men's skulls.'*

"No skull, and not the ghost of a pearl here! Nothing, alas, to tell of the neighbourhood of a human being! Nothing but the impalpable dust of molluscs of past ages. What matter? Now is the time for me to try the tentacles of my

* Shakespeare. "Richard III."

diving-bell, and to prove their superiority over the greased plummet of former soundings. They are a little short, these india-rubber arms of mine! It is with great difficulty that I have been able to pick up a handful of *débris*. *Débris* which the impermeable glove has faithfully brought me, notwithstanding; and which I have succeeded in bringing into the cabin by turning the sleeve or huge finger, and shutting it by means of its obturators, which I provided for detaching the glove and warehousing the collection; nothing worth picking up after all, except as a specimen of what can be gathered by a human hand at a depth of twenty-eight hundred feet, and to provide a month's work for Monte Cristo's microscope. Improvement suggested: lengthen the india-rubber arms of my diving-bell, and provide them with elementary tools, spade, hammer, and pincers, to be attached to the outside wall of the diving-bell. Sounds in the telephone: '*Halloo! halloo!*' What do these worthy people want? Monte Cristo appears to be getting impatient, and wondering if I am dead. '*Not yet! I am going to give the order, presently, to be drawn up.*'

"Time to take a few more notes. Respirable air without appreciable change; oxygen in plenty; thermometer risen two degrees and three-tenths. Atmospheric pressure stationary since the start. Come! decisive experience has been gained; the only thing, now, is to go back on board, and make another attempt another day.

"12.57. '*Halloo! halloo!*' Sh — The order is given to draw up. Sh — We are tripping anchor. We are shaken a little bit, but nothing to speak of; the bottom of my cabin emerges from its bed of sand; then a continued noise of water swishing past the walls of the diving-bell, which rises and rises, while the needle goes back on the dial, instead of stopping, by reason of our speed of fifty yards per minute. Telephoned:

'*All right! but increase the pace a little.*' It is going now at eighty yards a minute. The needle points at six hundred and fifty.

"1.13. A noise of dripping on all sides. A cheer from the crew. Here I am again, lifted up in sixteen minutes. I have nothing to do but draw the bolt and jump on deck."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DIVING-BELL.

THE crew of the *Cinderella* welcomed the return of the audacious explorer with enthusiastic joy. During his short sojourn on board the yacht, René had made himself liked by all; and workmen and sailors had awaited with keen anxiety the result of the hazardous experiment. Monte Cristo, himself, had felt his princely heart beat rather more quickly as the intrepid officer disappeared in the abyss. Therefore, he felt sincere emotion on seeing him come back; he ran to him and pressed him in his arms. "Champagne for everybody to drink M. Caoudal's health!" he said to Sacripanti, who bowed and obeyed the order without delay. "And you, my dear hero, must be famished, I 'm sure."

"You are right; I am voraciously hungry," replied the lieutenant; "but that is between ourselves, however. I could never have believed I should be a prey to such nervous excitement. My pulse beats so fast, I almost thought I could live on air, but, now you mention it, the void in my inner man destroys that illusion."

"Come, come! your *sang-froid* is simply admirable.

Do not undervalue yourself, but let us sit down to the lunch you have so well earned."

While they did justice to the lunch, René gave his host an account of the main facts of the journey, and gave him the specimens he had brought up with him. The prince was delighted, and already foresaw a series of discoveries — by proxy — glorious for the yacht and for himself. He passed the rest of the day at his microscope in a state of feverish agitation, which contrasted with the calm demeanour of the young lieutenant.

The next day René got to work again, accomplishing, every day, three or four fresh descents, in order to take separate bearings, with the greatest care, at distances of two or three marine miles. Sometimes the state of the water made the operation impracticable. There was then nothing for it but to wait, and René was tortured with impatience. Although his researches had, so far, brought him no satisfactory result, his conviction remained unshaken that the mysterious subterranean dwelling which had sheltered him for some few never to be forgotten hours, or minutes, ought to be situated between the Sargassian Sea and the Azores. To explore that vast region, to sound successively every part of it, — such was the intrepid (mad, some would say) project he conceived and pursued with indefatigable perseverance.

No one else knew of this plan but Hélène. René looked upon her as the only person capable of believing in the reality of his adventure. And if he needed encouragement, it was in that direction that he found it, in the youthful imagination, large-heartedness and characteristic good sense of the unsophisticated girl. But he had something better still — faith — the lever which removes mountains and triumphs over difficulties. That was why, notwithstanding all obstacles, he accomplished his end. Monte Cristo began to wonder at the tenacity with which his young and distinguished collaborator, as he called him, not without a shade of patronizing fatuity, set himself to repeated expeditions having no apparent result; for the india-rubber arms of the diving-bell had not brought up any hitherto unknown animal or vegetable variety.

But there was one man on board who grew more and more curious day by day; and that was Sacripanti. The Levantine rapacity of his mind could not believe that Caoudal exposed himself every day to such danger for any purely scientific object. The conviction took hold of him, little by little, that the lieutenant must be possessed of precise and particular information respecting some treasure submerged near the Azores, — a galleon, perhaps, laden with piastres and sunk for centuries under the weight of

its riches; or, who could tell? an old vessel from the East Indies, whose rotten planks concealed beneath the waves a cargo of diamonds and rubies. Nothing but the attraction of so much wealth could account for Caoudal's perseverance. At this idea Sacripanti's black eyes glittered; his sallow face flushed with avarice; he swore between his white teeth that, in one way or other, he would have his share of the windfall.

His first manœuvre in that direction was not a happy one. After having loaded René, as his custom was, with nauseous flattery in reference to his unrelaxing heroism, he suggested that these expeditions would be less monotonous if M. Caoudal had a companion. "Perhaps, without having to look very far," added he, trying to assume a modest manner, but one which was only abject, "perhaps you might find, on board, a man whose devotion to science might equal your own, and who would feel honoured at serving you as your pupil, or even to help manœuvre —" To which Caoudal replied that he thanked Captain Sacripanti for his obliging offers, but that the submersible chamber was constructed to accommodate one passenger only. Baffled on that head, the "second in command" tried another plan, and began systematically to excite the jealousy of his employer.

From morning till evening he developed this idea,

that, thenceforth, in the matter of shallow soundings, it would be no longer a question, in the Academies, of the yacht *Cinderella*, but simply and solely of Caoudal's diving-bell.

"But the diving-bell was constructed on board the yacht, and we immersed it ourselves," objected Monte Cristo.

"That does n't matter," said Sacripanti, oracularly. "Your highness has only too many detractors and enemies already among the learned bodies. Without appearing to attach importance to the thing, these people will get into the way of speaking of Caoudal's diving-bell; by degrees the public will get accustomed to repeating the name; and that of the *Cinderella* and of its illustrious commander will retire into the shade and be forgotten."

Such a prospect as that could not but make Monte Cristo extremely uncomfortable, but he shrank from avowing it. "It is impossible!" said he, slapping his knees with a gesture habitual to him in moments of doubt. "The civilized world knows that I have inaugurated in person the shallow soundings of the Atlantic, this diving-bell has been constructed on board my yacht, it is a part of it, it is inseparable. I cannot admit that it will tend to make it forgotten."

"Very well! your highness has only to wait two or three months; we shall see whether I am right

or not." Sacripanti persisted so long and so well with these insinuations that he succeeded in making his chief uneasy.

"After all, what can we do?" asked Monte Cristo, pushed to the extremity of perplexity.

"I see only one remedy, and that would be to insist that an officer on board accompany M. Caoudal in his cabin, when it goes under water?"

"That is a good idea!—You, for instance!" Then, all at once, pausing, struck with a sudden idea: "Or myself! Why not I?" added he.

Sacripanti alleged the greatness and importance of the prince, both on land and on board his own yacht, as a reason against it. But Monte Cristo was bent upon it and nothing would stop him. "It is clear that is the solution of the difficulty! The best and the most simple!" said he, walking with rapid strides up and down the poop. "And indeed what can be fairer? The diving-bell is my work and my property, since it would never have existed but for my yacht and my workshops. Suffice it to say that I undertake personally to effectuate some soundings, and that I report thereupon to the scientific world, so that no one will dream of depriving me of an honour due to myself. It is an understood thing that I embark in the diving-bell!"

He at once communicated his plan to René. It

was little to his taste, and he thought it necessary to make some objection to the invasion of his cabin. But the prince appeared to attach so much importance to the thing, and he had from the first done everything with such a good grace to meet the least wishes of the young lieutenant, that he felt it would look like great ingratitude if he did not, in his turn, show himself generous. He therefore acquiesced, and it was agreed that the next morning they would make a first attempt. Convinced that the unique experience would suffice to cure his highness of his fancy, René changed nothing in his ordinary plan of operation. Matters thus settled to their satisfaction, they retired for the night.

A night's rest gives one time and opportunity to think things over. Evidently that of the prince had not been without uneasy thoughts, for the next morning, when he appeared on deck, he looked pale and extremely uncomfortable. He had every appearance of not having closed an eye all night, and showed no impatience to shut himself up in the submersible chamber. René, however, without appearing to notice this demeanour, gave a look round to see that every detail was in order. He had doubled the usual quantity of barytic water in the china vase, and prepared the flagon of oxygen for its normal working; he satisfied himself that everything was in its right place; then, his inspection ended, he opened

the door wide, saying: "Now, my dear prince, when you are quite ready!" There was no possibility of going back. Monte Cristo, more dead than alive, in spite of a bumper of rum, with which he had just fortified himself, judged it necessary to address a solemn farewell to his crew:

"My children," said he, in a voice choked with emotion, "if adverse destiny wills that I should never return from this hazardous enterprise, know that my last thought was for you! I embrace you all in the person of my faithful Sacripanti!" After which he imprinted two resounding kisses on the swarthy cheeks of the Levantine, which were streaming with tears called up for the occasion; then, with a theatrical step, he set foot on the threshold of the diving-bell. René followed him at once without so much ceremony.

The door shut and caulked upon the two explorers, the prince appeared somewhat reassured on finding that calmness and silence reigned in the submersible prison. He stretched himself on the sofa and awaited events with resignation. His companion in misfortune gave the order to set out.

The needle began to move. When he saw that all was going as well as could be wished, as simply as possible, and that he did not even feel the motion of the diving-bell and found himself in three minutes at a depth of a hundred yards, his habitual good

humour came to the front, and he drew from his pocket a magnificent cigar and lighted it.

"There is a proof of the quality of our respiratory air!" said René, smiling.

"What! Do you think there would be any danger in smoking here!" asked the prince, ready to sacrifice his cigar.

"No danger but that of making our atmosphere a little less pure and transparent," replied the young officer.

He had hardly finished speaking when an ominous creaking of the floor of the cabin was heard; at the same moment it stopped short with a shake that knocked them both down. The prince, seated on the sofa, could not have been better placed for bearing, without serious damage, the consequences of his fall. René, on the contrary, was thrown with great force against the starboard wall, and immediately felt great pain in his shoulder.

His first care was, nevertheless, to spring to the telephone to give the order to cease paying out the cable, and then to try to find out, by means of the electric light, the nature of the incident. A glance to larboard explained all, and the explanation was as marvellous as it was unexpected.

The diving-bell had crashed into a colossal dome of thick crystal plates, and remained fixed there. This crystal dome, illuminated with a dazzling light,

which made the electric lamp look pale, was completely visible in all its parts, and appeared to belong to an immense conservatory, covering the most strange and luxuriant vegetation. Further along, there seemed to be a continuation of the building, in the shape of galleries, likewise of crystal. All these galleries, like the dome, seemed to have a double transparent roof divided into compartments by water-tight partitions, so that the diving-bell, in staving in the upper roof, had done nothing worse than opening to the water a compartment in the ceiling a few cubic yards in extent. Under the lower roof there was no water, but a clear and luminous atmosphere, where giant trees, handsome ferns, and many-coloured flowers seemed to live a luxuriant life. The floor of the submarine conservatory was covered with fine white sand, forming, as far as the eye could see, alleys crossing each other at right angles.

René could not doubt that chance had conducted him this time to the object of his eager search. If he had thought of counting the beats of his pulse, he would have found them considerably quickened. Gazing with all his eyes at the spectacle spread out before him, he observed the height of the thick, glassy fortress against which he had fallen, and whose translucent walls seemed strong enough to defy the elements and the centuries. His eye

glued, so to speak, to the spy-glass, he drank in at every pore the living and tangible reality he had at last succeeded in finding. The beauty of the gardens, which spread themselves out in an interminable series of flowers in groups and hanging-baskets, would have sufficed to mark the spot as the dwelling of a demi-god, even if the imposing edifice itself had not done so. A moment more, and the happy traveller was to be accorded a sight of the owners of the conservatory.

At the moment when the diving-bell grounded, the gardens were deserted. He wondered, trembling with hope and joy, if he should see any one to give life to the picture, when a slight movement at the end of one of the paths made his heart beat more quickly still. Holding his breath, and concentrating his gaze with all his powers of attention, he waited. Not a doubt about it! They were his host and hostess who were coming towards him. He recognized the dignified old man, and, by his side, walking with a light, springing step, the graceful Undine. They were too far off for René to distinguish the expression of their faces, but he was able to note the nobleness of their outline, and their proud bearing. By degrees, as the distance lessened between them, he recognized the carriage of the head, the queenly brow, the charming features which had lived in his memory. But, were they coming to him? Would

they come to the crystal wall, realize that he was there, greet him, perhaps receive him?

No. Arrived at a cross-way where several paths met, they turned their steps to the left and disappeared behind a group of flowers. At the same moment, a voice of thunder close beside him exclaimed: "Admirable creature! What would not one give to see her again!" It was the prince who spoke.

He had recovered from his surprise, and was looking through one of the spy-glasses at the wonderful sight. René had completely forgotten his presence. But this tremendous voice awoke him to the reality of it.

How extremely unlucky that Monte Cristo should be there to spoil everything! just at the very time that his object was gained! He was ready to die of disgust. With a furious bound, and as though to hide his discovery from the profanation of indiscreet eyes, he threw himself on the telephone.

"*Halloo! Halloo! Draw up quickly!*" cried he.

And, almost immediately, the cable, with a grating sound, wrenched the diving-bell from the crystal dome where it had lodged itself. Suddenly, magic conservatory, venerable trees, brilliant flowers, and long alleys disappeared as in a dream. Monte Cristo, still looking through his spy-glass, saw the iridescent shimmer of the submarine light gradually

extinguished by the dark sea waves. Then everything was effaced. The diving-bell continued to rise, and the needle did not mark more than a hundred and eighty yards.

"You seemed to be in a great hurry to come to the surface!" said the prince, sharply. "The sight was, at least, worth the trouble of looking at, and, for my part, I shall not fail to have another look at it."

René made no reply. But no sooner had they set foot on board, than he informed the prince that the laboratory no longer contained the necessary elements for the purifying of air in the submersible chamber. This was perfectly true, for the lieutenant had thrown into the sea all the baryta at his disposal.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TORPEDO-BOAT "TITANIA."

In less than a month after the last journey in the diving-bell, recorded in the previous chapter, we find the young officer rectifying diagrams in a large metallurgic workshop in the Victor Hugo Avenue, Paris.

He had taken leave of the yacht *Cinderella* and the Prince of Monte Cristo in the harbour of Cadiz, after having with considerable difficulty wrung from "the patron of science" a promise on his word of honour to reveal nothing, till he had heard from him again, of what they had seen at the bottom of the sea. This was no small concession on the part of so vain and egotistical a man, convinced, as he was, that the discovery was his own. René alleged the necessity of perfecting his methods of investigation and of completing his notes before submitting them to the learned bodies; and the prince, well knowing that he could do nothing without his "young and distinguished collaborator," allowed himself to be persuaded.

In fact, what René now wanted was to be let alone. He needed plenty of liberty, and he wished to be under no further obligation to the proprietor of the *Cinderella*. Since he had seen once more the mysterious home of his sea-nymph; since through the transparent walls he had refound her lovely form, the idea of any intrusion whatever in his enterprise was intolerable. He wished to pursue it alone and by more decisive means than the diving-bell that he had invented. In the first place, he required a more mobile apparatus, in which he could circumnavigate the crystal prison which contained the young fairy; something different from the submersible cabin, reaching bottom wherever chance might take it. Some means of submarine navigation suggested itself. René had thought of a torpedo-boat, like those used in war; but supposing he could get the use of such a thing for a purely scientific object, or for a private enterprise, an ordinary torpedo-boat, though actually submersible, was not sufficiently manageable to satisfy his requirements. He resolved to construct, on his own account, assisted by a subsidy from the State, a special submarine boat, capable of sinking to the bottom, rising quickly to the surface, and being navigated with equal ease above and below water. The experience he had gained in his diving-bell enabled him to formulate a plan of this boat; and the solid friendships his

father and grandfather had made in the Navy Department would help him at the outset to get the necessary assistance in that quarter. Thanks to the unfailing generosity of his mother, he had no difficulty about the initial expense; and, explaining his project to the engineers, Rouergue Brothers, he set to work.

The chief feature of his plan was a small craft, forty-two feet long and fifteen feet wide, made of steel plates, to contain six persons, and capable of navigation, both above and below water, by means of an electric motor, and carrying a supply of oxygen. The idea was merely a development of the submersible cabin made on board the *Cinderella*, but so completely and perfectly solved, that the best judges at once gave it their approval. The vessel was to be raised or lowered by means of tanks, which could be filled or emptied at will. To purify the air, a vase of protoxide of barium was to be used. A powerful electric light, with glass on all sides, and india-rubber arms like those of the diving-bell, but provided with a special set of tools, completed the *ensemble*. The semicircular deck of the little vessel, hermetically closed for submersion, was to open lengthwise in two halves for ordinary navigation, and allow the stepping of two small iron masts provided with large lateen sails. A cockpit placed aft would allow one man to navigate the boat. René had decided that Kermadec

should be that man, and he had, without difficulty, obtained leave for him for the same duration as his own.

The brave lad, now completely recovered from the effects of his injuries, accepted with unmixed satisfaction the proposal to set out with his young master on his travels. It is true he would have been more in his element reefing the topsail of a man-of-war than in manœuvering a submarine boat; but he was too proud of having been chosen by M. Caoudal as travelling companion not to begin at once to study the new method of navigation; and all his time, except what he spent at the Musée de Marine, was given to working hard at a "Treatise on Torpedo-boats and Submarine Craft," a book of which he was very proud. Happily the time has gone by when humble folks like Kermadec were completely deprived, by want of education, of all intellectual pleasure. Kermadec thought of his father, a man gifted with rare intelligence, but altogether uncultivated, who had often regretted, in his hearing, his inability to sign his name. He had tried to learn in later life, and the topman still remembered the desperate and often fruitless efforts of the poor fisherman to train his gnarled fingers, stiffened with hard work at sea, to the handling of pen or pencil. He broke these frail engines between his iron fingers, like pieces of glass, without succeeding in tracing on the

paper anything but hieroglyphics which would have been the despair of Champollion.

Yvon Kermadec, the topman and "dandy" of the present time, was then a gamin, sauntering with lagging steps to school, like any sluggish snail. But one day, on his return from school, he began to teach his father; and, quite young, learnt to appreciate the benefits of education, which the most destitute nowadays claim by right. The wise counsels of his officer had proved salutary to him; he had developed a taste for reading; and, instead of emptying his pockets and ruining his health at the "wine shop," he employed his time in furnishing his mind with all sorts of useful knowledge. He felt he owed a debt of gratitude to René; and the fact of his having received this last proof of confidence and esteem, following his sojourn at "The Poplars," increased the affection he had always felt for his chief.

René, on his side, was much attached to the brave fellow, so good and lively, so frank and so plucky; and they both looked forward with much pleasure to their adventurous cruise. Unwilling to risk the lad's untimely chatter, — or even the head-shakings, closed lips, winks and ostentatious reticence, by which some people make it known that they are keeping a secret, — René had not told Yvon anything about the wonderful things to be found at

the bottom of the Atlantic. He reserved this for another time and place; not feeling quite sure, besides, that the Breton imagination of the top-man might not conceive a prejudice against a *lusus naturæ* like that of the charming water-nymph. Suppose he were to look upon her as a sorceress, and refuse to go! René judged that in every respect the sailor was an ideal companion, and did not wish to run the risk of losing him for any tenaciously persistent superstition which might be hidden in his Celtic brain; and, as things were, Kermadec knew nothing of any encounter he might expose himself to at the bottom of the sea.

Meanwhile, they pushed the work on with a will, and the boat already began to take shape. She presented, when open, the smart appearance of a yacht, and, when closed, that of a most formidable weapon of destruction. Moreover, Rouergue Brothers agreed to call her a "torpedo-boat," although she did not carry a torpedo. Besides, contrary to the usual custom in small war vessels, she had no number given to her, but was simply named *Titania*. All Paris came to have a look at her, and for a week crowds filed past her, as she lay in the workshop. Everybody had spoken of the new invention; the daily papers had discussed it; reporters and interviewers were busy describing and explaining its minutest details; so that René had

become the fashion before his boat had even received her third coat of black paint. This was hardly dry when he and Kermadec set out in charge of the car upon which the *Titania* was to travel to Brest. Madame Caoudal had already arrived there, accompanied by Hélène and Doctor Patrice. In spite of the terror the excellent lady felt at the thought of seeing her son embark on such a machine, she would not for worlds have missed being present at the first trial-trip in the harbour. One may be quite sure that Hélène kept her own counsel as to the object of the proposed voyage.

For six days the two ladies had been anxiously awaiting the arrival of their dear sailor. By a lucky chance the *Hercules* had come to regulate her compass in Brest Harbour, and Captain Harancourt and his officers lost no time in paying their respects to the mother of their brother officer. How Madame Caoudal enjoyed hearing them speak of her boy! It was a pleasure to see her beautiful face light up with a radiant smile, when the gallant captain or one of his young subalterns told her of some trait of good comradeship, of intelligence or courage on his part. Though she had too much good taste to boast about him, her pride in being his mother was evident in spite of herself, and Lieutenant Bruyères used to take a malicious pleas-

ure in surprising her into exclaiming with effusion: "He is so charming, my René!" then recovering herself with a blush — "I mean — you are all so good and kind, gentlemen" — hoping thus to hide her confusion.

Captain Harancourt understood her motherly heart; he knew how to let her speak freely, and to recapitulate the thousand perfections of her idol; and, as he himself had a great affection for his lieutenant, he bore it all without fatigue. Madame Caoudal found in him a listener after her own heart, and, though making excuses every time that she was betrayed into going into raptures over the absentee, she began again whenever she could gain his sympathetic ear.

"Good gracious! if René were to hear me!" she sometimes said to her niece, terrified at the thought. "Do you think he would have said I was making myself ridiculous about him, this evening for example?"

"At what particular time, auntie?" said Hélène, mischievously. "When you were telling us about his cutting his second teeth, or when you explained that, by some surprising combination of circumstances, he did not always take all the prizes at college?"

"What nonsense, I never said anything like that! Only I am afraid I have talked too much about him.

I should not like that. Those gentlemen must have thought me very indiscreet."

"Those gentlemen would be very glad to have such a mother as you," cried Hélène. "Do you not think so, doctor?"

"Yes, and also a cousin like René's, I imagine."

"Oh, as to the cousin, they could do very well without her; but the mother, they could n't find another like you anywhere, Aunt Alice."

"I know very well what they think," said Doctor Patrice. "But, as it does not do to encourage vanity, I will take care not to repeat it."

"Indeed! and who asked you, sir," cried Hélène, laughing. "Let them think what they like, they are René's comrades, and we like them all for that reason."

"That is very true," said Madame Caoudal. "It warms my heart to see and hear them. And besides, they appear to be very distinguished."

"More especially when they tell of the fine doings of my respected cousin, is it not so, little auntie?"

"My poor child!" said Madame Caoudal, her eyes suddenly filling with tears. "When I picture to myself the perils that he has escaped! and what risks he is going to run in that cursed, — I mean that horrid submarine boat —" She paused to wipe her eyes.

"You see, Aunt Alice can't bring herself to calling it a cursed boat, because it is the work of her son," said Hélène to the doctor. "She must not begin again to worry herself about it. We must keep her spirits up."

And they both endeavoured to put fresh courage into the anxious mother; a difficult task, since, waking or sleeping, her one thought was of the accidents which might happen to him.

Finally the inventor arrived. All the town was on hand to assist at the launching of the boat. Among the numerous vessels which were ranged along the harbour, in order to be eye-witnesses of the event, was the *Cinderella*, whose princely proprietor had sailed straight for Brest, on hearing what his renowned young friend was meditating. Ah! he was not of the number of people who discourage interviewers! He received them with open arms; gave them a thousand details about himself and his yacht, about René, and the ability of his "young and distinguished collaborator," his workmen, and the cruise he had made. He had come, by degrees, to consider himself the hero of the affair. Needless to say, he lost no time in calling on Madame Caoudal, and, in the most gracious manner, placed his yacht at the disposal of the ladies for the day of the launching. But they had previously accepted an invitation from Captain Harancourt, and, at an early hour, the

captain's gig was sent to bring them on board the *Hercules*.

All the townspeople were massed on the quay, as far as it would give standing-room, and the neighbouring roofs of the houses were covered with people, who, one and all, as René and Kermadec appeared, gave them a hearty cheer. That from the *Hercules* was not to be outdone. The entire crew, perched in the rigging, awaited with anxiety the result of the experiment. The merest novice considered himself directly interested in its success. Punctually at noon, the lieutenant and the sailor embarked on the *Titania*. The coquettish little craft, light as a feather, balanced itself on the dark-green waters of the port. A salute was fired, and then the masts were raised, the two sails unfurled, filled gracefully by the breeze, and she started on her trip. She described a large circle in the harbour, seemed to flirt with the mysterious sea for a while, and then returned to the point from which she set out. Then René and Kermadec rose and saluted the crowd, who responded with a tremendous cheer. The next instant, the rigging was seen to fold itself with the ease of a bird folding its wings. The lieutenant and the sailor seated themselves in the bottom of the cockpit, while the two halves of the arched deck closed above their heads. For a minute or two the torpedo-boat floated in its new shape. Then, all at

once, as if having suddenly decided to disappear, she slowly sank like a whale, and was lost to sight. A fresh cheer saluted her disappearance. Everybody applauded, and then opera and field-glasses were put in requisition to scan the harbour, so as to get the first sight of the return of the submarine boat.

A quarter of an hour passed. Every one waited in silence, followed by intense anxiety, which increased moment by moment. Madame Caoudal, when the boat sank, turned white to the lips. She had not been able to stifle a cry, lost in the hurrahs of the crowd, when the deck of the *Titania* closed over her son. It looked to her as if his coffin-lid had closed over him. This horrible thought clung to her when the little boat disappeared. To see him there, without air to breathe, buried under mountains of water! Oh, it was frightful! The poor mother clasped her hands under her mantle, and waited, as white as a sheet, with a fixed stare. Hélène perceived her aunt's distress, and, quietly slipping her arm under hers, pressed it to give her courage. She herself, frightened, deeply moved, but confidently happy, excited by this adventurous proceeding of her cousin, had never looked more charming. With her straw hat, trimmed with large marguerites, her dress of gray woollen material, and a wide blue ribbon encircling her slender waist, she attracted the admiration

of all who surrounded her. But, in her perfect simplicity, she did not seem to notice it.

"There, mademoiselle! down there, do you see?" suddenly cried Doctor Patrice, who, standing behind her, had been searching the harbour by means of a first-rate glass.

"Where? Which side?" said Hélène, trembling.

Madame Caoudal did not dare look. But the shouts of the crowd obliged her to open her eyes, and two or three thousand yards in front of her, towards the west, she saw, emerging slowly, what looked at first like a whale's back. Very soon the boat floated; the hull opened, the sails unfurled, and she came sailing along once more to the starting point.

The experiment had taken thirty-two minutes. It was a complete success. René and Kermadec landed amid the most enthusiastic acclamations. A quarter of an hour later, Madame Caoudal pressed her son to her heart. Poor woman! she was not to enjoy this happiness long, for the next morning, at sunrise, the *Titania* had left the harbour, with René and Kermadec on board. At eight o'clock, by the first post, Madame Caoudal received a pencilled note: "*I am off. Good-by to all. René.*"

CHAPTER X.

HÉLÈNE RIEUX TO BERTHA LUZAN.

"You complain, dear Bertha, that I have forsaken you by coming to Brest, and that I do not write often enough. You implore me to have pity on you and let you have news of us. You suspect me of forgetting my old friends in the midst of the gay doings on board the *Hercules* and the splendours of the *Prefecture Maritime*. That everything here interests me intensely I cannot deny; but, far from forgetting my dear Poplars, I hope I shall not be many weeks older before I find myself there, and near you again. I must confess that, if there were any danger of my head being turned, the vortex of entertainments and surprises invented here in our honour would affect me. Aunt Alice, herself, is captivated by it, and at the bottom of her heart is, I really believe, all but reconciled to the enemy. Certainly she ought to know better than most people what French seamen are worth. Though the officers of the *Hercules* do not admit it, we agree in thinking the navy brilliantly represented here at present. But it is nothing to meet one of them now and again; to see them in perfection one must meet them all together on board the vessel, taking one by storm with their good-nature, their kind attentions, their liveliness, and chivalric devotion. Captain Harancourt is the most surprising of all; never have I seen more heartiness, more animation, or better waltzing! And

they say he is a man of great courage — like all the others, for that matter! A beardless lieutenant, M. des Bruyères, tells me that he is fifty if he is a day. Only the sea can produce such miracles. Amidst all our enjoyment, that which gives auntie and me the greatest pleasure is to hear the way they speak of our dear René, and to feel that all this display of gallantry is really to show us their esteem for him, their sincere admiration for his intrepidity, and their brotherly pride in him as a mess-mate. I write thus openly to you, dear Bertha, because I know that no one appreciates our sailor boy better than you. Many a time, when, for fear of grieving auntie, I have had to restrain myself from making a confidant of her, I have found in you the faithful echo of my ambitions and hopes on the subject of my adopted brother's career. Certainly, the path he has chosen is difficult and dangerous. With the taste for adventures which governs him, obstacles and perils multiply under his feet. While we are dancing, and going from *fête* to *fête*, one cannot forget that he is exposed to the most fearful risks; that he is all but alone at the bottom of the sea; that any minute the element he has dared to brave may turn upon him, swallow him up and destroy him in a twinkling. These apprehensions of mine, which I combat daily in my aunt, I dare not mention to any one but you. I feel sometimes tempted to speak of them to Stephen; but with his unfortunate mania for considering me as René's *fiancée*, he would be sure to misinterpret my fears. And remembering your lectures on the subject, my sage Minerva, while refusing to sue for his good graces, I refrain from tormenting him uselessly. Still I get very impatient now and then.

"I wish, as I said before, that the suspense was over. Though I do not own it to Aunt Alice, I begin to think that René's absence is rather a long one. It is true he did not fix any precise time for his return; indeed, he hardly let us

know when he intended to set out; but it is now twenty days since we saw the water close over the *Titania*, and he left us the next day. Ah! it was a beautiful sight, and I did feel proud! I felt nothing but joy and hope that day. How I laughed with Lieutenant Briant (another of these amiable fellows) at the scarcely veiled pretentions of the Prince of Monte Cristo! This noble personage, who is all polite attention to your humble servant, has the weakness to imagine himself — René's first attempts having been made on board the *Cinderella* — the real inventor, and consequently the hero of the exploits of the *Titania*. He established himself here with his yacht for the day of the launching, and it was rare fun to see him strutting about on shore afterwards, boasting in a patronizing way of the merits of his 'young associate,' giving all to understand that the veritable explorer of the deep was the Prince of Monte Cristo. Everything was brilliant and gay that day, and I had no fears, for René's face was full of confidence. I seemed to read success in it. If we only could get news of him! Every minute now seems longer and heavier. Forgive me, dear friend, for thus communicating my fears to you, but it is such a relief to me, since I am obliged to hide them from auntie. If they should prove vain, she may as well be spared them, but if not, heaven grant I may find resources of consolation and comfort for her, or that the need may be long deferred.

"Yours affectionately,

"HÉLÈNE."

The gloomy presentiments which gradually filled poor Hélène's courageous soul, and of which she unbosomed herself in her letter to her friend, did not take shape in Madame Caoudal's mind. The reason

of it was that her terror of the sea and everything to do with it was, so to speak, chronic; and all her friends, out of respectful pity at the thought of what might be in store for her, rivalled each other in the ingenuity with which they sought to lull her possible fears, and to persuade her to pass in comparative quiet the days of suspense in which, while a disaster was dreaded, there was, at least, a chance of good news arriving. And so well did they succeed, that, while Hélène, as the days went by, felt doubt gnawing at her heart, René's mother had never suspected what all around her were trying to hide from her.

It was by this time twenty-seven days since René and Kermadec had disappeared in search of the unknown. On board the *Hercules* they said already that some disaster, or at least some accident, must have befallen them. According to their calculation, Caoudal ought to have been able five or six times over to telegraph news of himself, from ports he would touch at. What could have prevented him? Had he exhausted his provisions, or his supply of air? Human strength and endurance have their limits; a man cannot live without rest and food at the bottom of the sea,—and then, he knew with what affectionate anxiety he was looked for at Brest. Surely, unless the *Titania* had perished with everything belonging to her, she

would have given signs of life. This dark silence augured very badly.

Captain Harancourt, himself the least pessimistic of men, was of that opinion, and now, when he saw Madame Caoudal and her niece, did everything in his power in dissimulating the profound compassion he felt for them, and was still to all appearance the amiable and cheery man they knew, speaking without visible constraint about Caoudal's enterprise, and affecting a confidence of which, in his heart of hearts, he had not a vestige left.

Doctor Patrice was by no means the least anxious of them. Near neighbours of the Caoudals, whose domain touched their small property, his parents had always been intimate friends of the family; his father, a surgeon in the navy, like himself, had, when quite young, been present at the death of René's grandfather, who was mortally wounded before Bomarsund. Monsieur and Madame Patrice had known and appreciated him for whom Madame Caoudal had mourned the first year of her married life; and the widow, sustained in those cruel moments by the faithful friendship of her neighbours, had always remained attached to them by ties of recollection and gratitude. And when Stephen's father and mother died, both of them long before the ordinary term nature has assigned to human life, the young man had found in Madame Caoudal a second mother.

She had encouraged him in his studies, and aided him in every way in his career, had always welcomed him at her fireside, and had procured for him the inestimable advantage, which nothing can replace afterwards, the appearance, manner, and tone which a youth learns by friendly intercourse with a well-bred woman. He felt for her a truly filial affection, and, with the full consciousness of all he owed to her, he could hardly help looking upon the irresistible love he felt for Hélène as a breach of confidence. He had been attracted by her, from almost the first day when she came to enliven "The Poplars," by her brightness and gentleness. He had made it a rule to efface himself in favour of René from the time when that young gentleman had manifested the least willingness to satisfy his mother's wish that he should marry Hélène; and, if sometimes it seemed to him that it was he whom she preferred, he shut his eyes resolutely to the dazzling vision. But, as it happened, all this delicacy was thrown away. Everything, from the first, was against the realization of the good lady's wishes. Of an imperious nature and with a strong love of ruling, she failed to see that René, her very image in this respect, would object to being coerced in such a matter; and that he reserved to himself, not without a right, the privilege of choosing his future companion. Above all, she could not admit that, beautiful and accomplished as

Hélène was, and sharing as she did his tastes, he should not reasonably prefer her to any one else; not understanding that, for an adventurous fellow like René, the strange, the unknown, would have a thousand times more attraction than the perfections he met with in his cousin. Stephen himself had seen and felt this for some time, but would not allow himself to build any hopes upon it. When he had heard René's glowing description of his incomparable Undine, and had seen how she had become the subject of all his thoughts, a feeling of satisfaction came into his mind, but he quickly repressed it. Good heavens! What would Madame Caoudal say if she should have to face the possibility of receiving, as the future mistress of "The Poplars," a woman clothed *à la Grecque*, a person speaking a mysterious language, a nymph, a siren! Truly, without being taxed with having rigorous provincial prejudice, one might be excused for recoiling before such a daughter-in-law.

The fears that the doctor felt at this time as to the fate of the *Titania* and her two passengers were mixed, therefore, with other confused personal apprehensions; a feverish expectation of some strange thing about to happen, some audacious enterprise, foolish, or, at any rate, out of the beaten track. It was in this state of mind that he received a message from the *Prefecture Maritime*, accompanied by a sealed packet:

"To Doctor Patrice:

"Sir: — A tin case containing a bottle carefully corked and sealed, picked up at sea some distance west of this port by a fishing smack, has been handed in this evening at the *Prefecture Maritime*. When opened, the bottle was found to contain a glass tube, in which had been placed a letter carefully sealed and addressed to you, along with this note: '*Please forward this letter without delay.*' We hasten to profit by your sojourn at Brest, to send it to you at once. Believe me, sir, Yours, etc., etc."

The doctor tore the letter open. It was from René!

"My Dear Stephen:

"It is now a week since I left you. The *Titania* has proved all that I could wish; swift, strong, easy to manage, without any defects in her outer shell or her internal arrangements. I am now on good terms with myself, and feel ready to face those who have aided my invention. But that does not mean that I am coming back to Brest, to resume the peaceful monotony of my old life, without a longer cruise.

"You will fully understand me, or I am much mistaken. You know what it has been given to me to have a glimpse of. Having once set foot in this marvellous world, having been admitted to contemplate quasi-divine beings, and to hear the music of their language, having drunk of the cup placed to my lips by the hand of the enchantress, and having received from her a token of remembrance, is it possible, think you, for me to resign myself tamely to the cultivation of cabbages in my garden for the rest of my days, instead of occupying my time by adding something to the page of history? But you know

me better. I might as well be stripped at once of youth and health. For reasons which I can guess, and which do you honour, you fear to encourage the hopes and wishes you perceived in me, and you have closed your ear to my confidences. It is all of no use, my dear fellow! No considerations or counsels of prudence can efface that which has happened to me; and that being so, there is only one course open to me: the imperious necessity of a complete understanding, the thirst to know the final outcome of this mystery, even if I burn my wings, or am altogether consumed. From the first day, on my awakening, fastened to the barrel and tossed about by the waves, my intention has been unaltered; I want to see her, speak to her, understand her, make myself understood by her. Night and day I have thought of her. Insane thoughts, some will say — thoughts of a man who should be shut up in a lunatic asylum. What would these wise people say if they knew that I have seen her again! Yes, again! At first, the obstacles seemed unsurmountable, the attempt foolish and hopeless; before the result was obtained it seemed as if I were playing a child's game. What did I not suffer before arriving so far? Well protected, well caulked in my diving-bell, and quite at my ease, I descended repeatedly to the bottom of the ocean. I have made voyages of exploration in the Sea of the Azores which mortals in love with novelty would envy me. Was that altogether rash and foolish? It seems to me that humanity must be very indifferent, and have very little curiosity, to let the centuries accumulate without trying to penetrate the mystery hidden in our seas, in our globe! However, as I said before, I have seen her again. My divinity inhabits a crystal mansion through whose transparent walls I have been permitted to gaze for a second time upon her unrivalled perfections. I long to find my way into this palace. But how? By what means? I do not know, but I am ready for anything,

any chance of accomplishing it. The only thing I am anxious about is the kind of reception I may meet with. I do not forget that the old man in the white robe was determined that my stay should not be prolonged more than was absolutely necessary. At the same time, I am equally sure that his charming daughter pleaded for me, and wished to keep me near her; and that, you see, gives me courage to brave anger much more formidable than that of her majestic guardian. Something tells me that she is waiting for me, that she finds me weak and tardy, armed as I am with her ring, in not yet having opened up some way of getting to her? What is her life like? What are her occupations in this fairy palace, so like a prison, withal? Perhaps she is wearied to death in the midst of the splendour. What is the mystery of this life of hers? A thousand hypotheses come into my brain, each in turn to be destroyed in my endeavours to solve it. I tell you all this, reserving to myself to make known the truth to everybody when I shall have discovered the clue. But when I recall the face which surpasses in beauty anything I could have imagined, and think of the enchanting accents of her voice, the legend of the sirens is no longer a myth to me, but must be based upon an incomplete adventure analogous to mine, of some traveller of ancient times. Any way, whatever comes of it, I will know soon, or perish in the attempt. Do not accuse me of folly or egotism, my dear Stephen. Make excuses for me, if I fail, to those whom I have left on shore. I swear to you that the power which guides me and compels me to act is irresistible. To remain inactive, to resolve never to pierce the mystery partly disclosed to me, would be to give the lie to my vocation, to condemn me to despair, or the folly of delay. I *must* go where I am called! It is because you will plead my case with those I love best on earth that I have told you this long story.

"You are nearer than any one else to my mother and Hélène. Make them understand that I was powerless to disobey the imperious impulse which hurries me on. If I do not come back you will take my place with them.

"Yours ever,

"RENÉ CAOUDAL.

"P. S. It is ten o'clock in the morning. We are just above the precise point where I have verified the locality of the submarine conservatory. There is just time to close this letter and to seal up the bottle, which I am going to throw into the Gulf Stream; and I am going to make my great plunge. Adieu, everybody."

CHAPTER XI.

FUNERAL ORATIONS.

Doctor Patrice lost no time in showing the letter to Madame Caoudal and Hélène. At first, on seeing her son's writing, she believed him safe; but, after reading his letter and realizing that it was dated three weeks back, she found it difficult to cherish any hope. All was over. Her René, her well-beloved, had met his death in this foolish enterprise. Moreover, she had always had a presentiment, or rather had always felt sure, that the rapacious sea would take her son from her, as it had taken his father. Those blue waves, which seemed to smile at the heavens, were to be the grave of all belonging to her. *Kismet* was written on them. How had she ever hoped for anything different? Why struggle against fate? Had she not known for certain how it would be, from the time that René embraced the abhorred career? Unhappy child! Had she not better have lost him in his cradle?—and not have fondled him, cherished and brought him up, only to suffer his irreparable loss by shipwreck! Was it not enough to drive her to

despair? And the weeping mother abandoned herself to grief.

It was in vain that Hélène, forgetting her own grief in order to combat that which was killing Madame Caoudal under her very eyes, forced herself to find words of consolation, to inspire in her aunt hopes which she herself no longer felt. Not only did Madame Caoudal repulse any arguments in favour of her son's safety, but was irritated when Hélène timidly suggested that another, later, letter *might* have miscarried.

"How absurd you are, my dear child!" she cried. "Do letters get lost? In all your existence do you remember more than one instance of it, or two at the most? No, no, there are no letters because he has not written, and if he has not written, my poor boy, it is because he is—" And, unable to pronounce the terrible word, the unhappy woman hid her face in her hands.

"But, Aunt Alice," persisted Hélène, her own eyes full of tears, "you know very well that I am not speaking of ordinary letters, simply put in the post. This letter has come to us in an unusual way, by an unlooked-for courier. How do we know that he has not sent others that may be now floating on the water, waiting to be picked up?"

"I tell you there is no chance of it," cried Madame Caoudal, perhaps in order to hear herself

contradicted, and to argue against her secret conviction. "No, I was a widow; I had but one son, and now I have no child — I survive all my loved ones — it is only myself that death does not wish for."

"Oh, Aunt Alice, do I not belong to you? Are you childless as long as you have your little girl?"

"Forgive me, my dear child. Grief is making me unkind," said the desolate mother, clasping the young girl in her arms. "Your affection is very sweet to me. You do not doubt it? In mourning him I mourn for you as well as for myself. If I lose a son, do not you lose a lover? And such a lover! could any young girl wish for one more charming?"

"Nevertheless, I will not weep for him!" replied Hélène, with all the cheerfulness she could muster, not wishing to notice this embarrassing assumption. "Something tells me that he will come back to us — and then — what joy!"

"Poor little thing! you are young, — at your age one can still dare to hope against evidence. But I, you see, have suffered too much. It is all over. Besides, I knew beforehand how it would be."

These were Madame Caoudal's best moments. At other times, plunged in gloomy silence, she abandoned herself to grief in a way that wrung Hélène's heart. The brave girl could find no words with which to heal so cruel a wound; the state of her

aunt caused her so much grief and uneasiness, that she, herself, durst not indulge in the relief of tears.

Doctor Patrice did his best to second her affectionate efforts. But what could they say — what could they do — when they really shared her opinion? They thought at first it would be better to take her to "The Poplars," thinking that in her own house, with all the familiar surroundings, and, above all, as far as possible from the sea, at which she could not look without shuddering, she might regain some degree of calmness, and might come in time to resign herself with less difficulty. But Madame Caoudal very decidedly opposed the suggestion. She would not quit that town till she heard something definite. "It was from this place he left; and it is to this place he will come back, — if he does come back," she repeated. And they could only yield to a wish so clearly expressed. Hélène, herself, was really glad to stay where she was. It seemed to her that her aunt was right, and that René, if he came back at all, would come there. And then had they not received here the welcome sympathy of their new friends on board the *Hercules*, and of their old friend Stephen?

His devotion was indefatigable. If any one could have replaced the absent one, it would have been he. Every day she felt increasingly how much his sympathy helped her. Indeed, the young *savant* must

have been blind not to have noticed it, but both he and Madame Caoudal seemed attacked with the same blindness, for, day after day, she persuaded herself still that René and Hélène were plighted lovers, while the sadness and reserve of the poor man became more and more marked. If Hélène could have overheard, unobserved, a conversation between the officers of the *Hercules*, perhaps she would have better understood this reserve. It was one evening when these gentlemen had left Madame Caoudal's *salon*, after having spent the evening with her.

"Mademoiselle Rieux is truly charming!" began Harancourt. "She appears to be as good as she is pretty. How touching her affection is for her sorely tried aunt!"

"True," said Briant; "if the expression had not become too commonplace, one would say she is her guardian angel."

"A very pretty little angel, who employs a very good dressmaker," said that frivolous youth Bruyères. "You know these ladies well, Patrice?"

"Very well," replied the doctor, coldly.

"Happy mortal! And, I imagine, Mademoiselle Rieux has a very good income."

"Probably," answered Patrice, still more icily.

"Poor Caoudal! If he should not come back as is to be feared, his cousin will inherit his fortune?"

The doctor was silent.

"Will she inherit it?" repeated Bruyères, lightly. "Do not take offence at my question, I beg, for I bear no grudge against Caoudal, and do him no harm in merely stating what, after all, is the fact."

"The devil!" ejaculated the captain. "If, indeed, Mademoiselle Rieux is the poor boy's heiress, she will certainly be one of the wealthiest heiresses in the country. You know I come from their neighbourhood; I know their property."

"Well, tell us, Patrice, what are the prospects of this charming guardian angel?" inquired Bruyères, who seemed to take a malicious pleasure in tormenting the doctor.

"I know nothing whatever about the prospects of Mademoiselle Rieux," replied Patrice, exasperated. "And, to speak plainly, I do not think the question concerns either you or me."

Upon this, he turned on his heel, and made his way down a side street. Des Bruyères burst into a laugh.

"Well, well, well! Can it be that he has designs in that quarter himself?" cried he. "We seem to be touching on delicate ground."

"We must admit," said the captain, "that the discussion is not in the best taste, and we cannot be surprised if an old friend of the family resents it."

"On my honour that is true," replied Bruyères, frankly. "But I did not think I was sinning against

propriety in proclaiming aloud my admiration for the charming young girl or in inquiring (quite disinterestedly, I assure you) the amount of her fortune."

"The life of the poor mother will be crushed if that unhappy boy does not turn up," said the captain, by way of changing the subject. "Can there be a more pitiable lot than that of sailors' wives, mothers, sweethearts, sisters? There is always mourning hanging over them."

"Oh, captain! I hope you are not going to spread such pessimistic views among marriageable young ladies," said Bruyères, with assumed anxiety. "That would handicap us all cruelly."

"Don't trouble yourself, my boy," said Monsieur Harancourt; "it is not such as you that are likely to be regretted. Why did you worry poor Patrice like that?"

"Why does he worry himself at what I said? A cat may look at a king, they say, much more a lieutenant at an amiable young girl, it seems to me."

"No matter," interrupted Monsieur Briant, "I am of the captain's opinion, that such questions must trouble Patrice. Has he not shown himself a good fellow in declining to answer them?"

"Well, if everybody is of that opinion, good evening, I'm off. But I stick to what I have said.

Mademoiselle Rieux is charming, and if she is rich into the bargain, the navy should enter the lists! And I, for one — I say it without any false modesty — am ready to do my duty as an officer and a Frenchman."

And, with a hearty laugh, he left his companions, who were in too serious a mood this evening to suit his taste.

As for Patrice, this new idea, presented in such a thoughtless manner by the lieutenant, was like a stab to him. *If René were lost, Hélène would inherit his fortune! She would be,* as the captain said, *one of the richest heiresses in the country.* He was, therefore, more than ever bound to watch over himself, lest he should betray his secret. If Hélène's fortune were doubled, there was nothing for it but to fly, to leave nothing undone to stifle the love he felt for her. Oh, how he wished, more and more, that René would come safe and sound out of this unlucky adventure! Des Bruyères had spoken as if he suspected something. Could it be that he, Patrice, looked as if he were seeking her for the sake of her money? Better that he never saw her again. What a pity it was! What a pity! She was so sweet! And Patrice was more sure than ever that their affection for one another was only that of brother and sister. Hence the grave, almost cold formality, which the doctor manifested from day to day, added an ele-

ment of sadness and restraint to their existence, painful enough before.

Among all the friends of the ladies, he who affected to take the deepest interest in their fears and hopes was, beyond a doubt, the Prince of Monte Cristo. At first, wherever he went, his one aim was to monopolize everybody's attention. Whatever was going on, whether happy or unhappy, war, shipwreck, victory, or horse-racing, the marriage or decease of friends, his highness made it his business, wherever he found himself, to play the most prominent *rôle*. And, from the first, the worthy man had taken René's disappearance in hand, so to speak. Every day he came, officious, important, talkative, to announce—that he had no news for them. Every day he perambulated the port, offering princely rewards to any one who would bring him news of the lost boat. He wrote letters to the papers informing them that "The Prince of Monte Cristo, deeply affected by the probable loss of his young collaborator, Lieutenant Caoudal (whom he had to some extent incited to the hazardous enterprise), intended to forego his usual summer cruise, and to institute 'in person' a search for him on board his yacht *Cinderella*." Dead or alive, he announced, nobly, he would find his friend. The Monte Cristos, as every one knew, were faithful to their high birth. Their motto compelled them to be so. Everybody knew

that it comprised the simple words: "Till Death." And the last of his race would not jeopardize in his person the renown of his royal house.

Intoxicated by all this self-satisfaction, the worthy man became ubiquitous. He was either in the town, in the harbour, or in Madame Caoudal's drawing-room; and the poor woman was nearly worn out. She had learnt to dread his ring at the door-bell, and the way in which he seated himself in front of her, throwing his gloves into his hat with a peremptory gesture, and slapping his knees after the manner of a man much pleased with himself.

"To-day, madame," he would say, in a stentorian voice, "we have accomplished a step, if I may so express myself!"

"What has happened, my dear sir?" the poor lady would inquire, trembling.

"We have decided, madame, to send down our regretted René's diving-bell."

"Do you mean, sir, that you are going?"

"Excuse me, madame! It is *here* that I propose to begin our search."

"But, since he himself has sent us word that he left these waters—" objected Madame Caoudal, perplexed.

"No matter, no matter! that is a mere detail. I was saying that we would make soundings, *here*, in the first instance. If they should have no result (as there is only too good reason to fear)—"

"Would it not be better, in that case, to search where there would be more chance of finding him?" timidly interrupted Madame Caoudal. "I certainly never have ventured to ask you, sir! But since you have the goodness to offer it to me—"

"One moment, dear madame. We must search *here*, first, in case (very improbably, by the way,) our dear young friend had lost himself on his way back. If we are not successful, we shall be free to try somewhere else."

"Then we have gained nothing," said Madame Caoudal, whose hopes were once more frustrated.

"So far, no, madame, no. But, never fear, I have undertaken to find him; and, *alive or dead*, I will bring him to you, on the word of honour of Monte Cristo!"

And he settled himself in his arm-chair with a defiant gesture like the pose in his famous three-quarter portrait, by Bonnat.

At other times, he set himself to describe or, rather, to analyze to her, her son's character, never appearing to think that she probably knew fully as much about him, and could have dispensed with so much idle chatter.

"Your son, madame, is what I should describe as *a man in the vanguard!* He will always be in advance of his time. And it is for that reason that he will never succeed in anything."

"Excuse me, sir," said Madame Caoudal, her motherly pride wounded, "my poor boy, on the contrary, always has succeeded in everything that he has undertaken! Even this unfortunate boat, as you can prove, accomplished just what he intended. And all his life René has been neat handed. We have noticed it hundreds of times, have n't we, Hélène?"

"Quite so, quite so, madame. But what I mean to say is, that your son, being naturally too adventurous to be satisfied to run in beaten paths, was certain to engage in some adventure, — what shall I call it? — rash, imprudent, unreasonable."

"Good heavens, my dear sir, he does not seem to have been considered very unreasonable; this last experiment of his succeeded so well, if my memory serves me, that your highness claims a large share of his invention!"

"Very true, perfectly correct, madame," replied the prince, rolling his eyes. And he indulged in an expressive pantomimic performance behind Madame Caoudal's back, tapping his forehead and regarding her with a compassionate look, as if to say that her grief had rendered her incapable of following any serious reasoning.

After this the intercourse between the two became less frequent, and had it not been for the lively admiration he professed for Mademoiselle Rieux, and

his excessive desire to mix himself up with everything, far or near, that excited public curiosity, his royal highness would have soon ceased to have anything to do with these "commoners," who seemed perfectly unconscious of his condescension in showing them attention. It is true that he considered it quite "up-to-date" and worthy of himself, so to speak, to put his crown in his pocket, and appear, in the presence of women, as a man of the world. But he would not have been displeased at finding his conduct regarded as magnanimous. However, in spite of the occasional stabs he administered each time that he found himself in Madame Caoudal's company, he persisted in playing his part of friend and protector of the family, and in showing himself at her house.

The *Hercules* soon had to leave Brest for the Mediterranean, and Madame Caoudal and Hélène were very glad when Patrice told them that he should not go on this voyage, at any rate. They had no difficulty in guessing that he had decided on this in order to remain near them for a time; and the moral support of his presence was most precious to them in their increasing distress.

CHAPTER XII.

KERMADEC'S MISSION.

EARLY one morning, Doctor Patrice was setting out to make his usual call on Madame Caoudal. As he left his own door, he almost fell back against it; for whom should he see, but Yvon Kermadec! The sailor, smarter than ever, with his nose in the air, his cheerful face and sailor's waddle, looked about him with his bright blue eyes, as if the whole place belonged to him. His flourishing appearance showed that he was by no means the worse for his absence. Patrice made one bound towards him.

"Why, Kermadec, that can't be you! Where have you sprung from? And René — your master — where is he?"

"My master is as well as you or I, sir."

"Is he here?"

"Well, no," said the topman, shaking his head in a mysterious manner. And, with his right thumb pointing over his left shoulder, he indicated a vague point in space.

"Where is he, then? How is it you have come

alone? What has become of the boat? We thought you were lost."

"Much the same thing," replied the seaman, mysteriously. "Upon my word, if any one knew how we have spent our time since we left they would open their eyes."

"Have you seen Madame Caoudal, yet?"

"No, doctor, my business is with you."

"With me? Why? Are you ill?"

"For that matter, no. I must say the air is good there (though there is not much of it); seeing that I never was better in my life."

"In that case what do you want with me?"

"This: I am sent by my officer with a message to the surgeon-major. He told me to bring you back with me."

"What! To take me back with you? Where, you booby?"

Once more the sailor made the sign with his thumb towards the same vague region as before, winking in a mysterious manner.

"What *do* you mean?" said the doctor, turning around on him.

"Sh—sh—sh — not so loud! My master desires that no one shall know where he is at this moment."

"But where is he? if I may venture discreetly to ask."

"Well, sir, to tell no lies about it, it is a rum kind of a place, and with rum ways of going on." And Kermadec raised his eyes and hands to heaven, as if the ways and goings on were beyond his powers to describe.

"Come! what are you trying to say? Explain yourself, if that is possible."

"Well, then," said Kermadec, having prudently looked around to assure himself that no one could hear him, "you see my officer and I have taken a voyage — one of those voyages —"

"Very good. You wish me to understand that he has arrived at the home of the people he was in search of."

"Ah, then, you are in the secret, sir. Well, that is so. My master is living in clover, I can tell you; and, saving your honour's respect, I, too, have nothing to complain of. If I had been able to write home to my cousin (who is a tidy sort of a girl) they would none of them have believed me."

"But to your story?"

"Well, to make a long story short, the old gentleman (your honour knows who I mean?) this here old man, who they say has lived more than a hundred years, is beginning to feel that he is getting old. Seems to me that you may live like a fish under water for a hundred years without heaving the anchor! Well, as I was saying, he is ill, poor old

gentleman, and my master wants you to come and see him."

"Devil take you! Am I to go to the bottom of the sea to feel the pulse of this old Father Neptune?"

"Saving your honour's respect, sir! However, here is the letter my master charged me to give you," added Kermadec, feeling in the pocket of his pea-jacket.

"You have a letter; then why did n't you say so before?" said the doctor, seizing the paper out of the sailor's hand. He tore open the envelope, and saw that it was indeed his friend's handwriting. It ran as follows:

"I write to you again, dear Stephen, because I have a special and urgent request to make to you; but this letter is quite as much for my mother and Hélène as for you. And first of all let me cry victory! I am in port, I have gained my end, and I am now writing to you on a mother-of-pearl table at the bottom of the sea, near the Azores, in the enchanted palace of Atlantis! That is the name of her whom I vowed to see again and whom I have found! If I were to tell you by what means I succeeded, I should need a volume. I will limit myself to a few important details. As you already know, I had, with my diving-bell, ascertained the precise site of the submarine dwelling; but I did not then know that it comprised an immense conservatory lighted up by a luminous source as brilliant as that of the sun, this light diffusing itself under the water to a considerable distance, and it assisted me to find my way here. Arrived at the region I knew to be in the neighbourhood of the dwelling, I opened the cisterns containing

the water, as I no longer needed the weight for sinking, ran my boat along, extinguishing the electric light, and keeping a sharp lookout through a port-hole. We had not gone more than two hundred yards, when the distant light began to be perceptible. It rapidly increased in brilliance, and it soon became possible to distinguish the focus and to steer for it. Forty minutes after I left the surface I found myself in contact with the crystal wall of the magic palace. But this time I was in possession of an apparatus infinitely more manageable, and I was able to pursue a regular investigation. I began by recognizing the form of the exterior of the conservatory. As I had supposed from my previous visit, it was composed of long, rectangular galleries, surmounted at regular distances by hemispheric cupolas. I saw even the breakage I had made with my diving-bell in one of the cupolas, and which had not been repaired; but what I failed to find in any part was a door, or any means whatever of effecting an entrance. In vain I went round and round the illuminated building, which was fully forty acres in extent; there appeared to be no break in the continuity of the transparent wall, against which I struggled much in the same way as a fly does when trying to get through a pane of glass to the outer air. I was just debating whether I should be driven to use force to penetrate into this submarine kingdom, and wondering what the consequences might be of such a burglarious proceeding, when my attention was attracted by a low part of the glass wall arranged like the basin of a lock, and I came closer to make a more minute investigation. The result of this examination was that I found myself right in front of a vast cistern or well, placed vertically above a second basin, which was empty like a dry dock, and bounded by movable walls provided with racks. No doubt this was really a lock, that is to say a veritable entrance. But how to get this door opened, the door by which I must

have entered once before? That was the next question. After mature deliberation I resolved to adopt the usual measure in cases when one desires admission, no matter where, by knocking at the door. For this purpose I had only to grasp a hammer with the india-rubber arm I had on the flank of the *Titania*. Immediately a pealing sound from the blows on the glass doors was heard throughout the passages of the conservatory, as I was afterwards told, though the noise I made was hardly perceptible to my ears. I speedily saw the effect of my loud knock. The old man of the sea, who I have since learned calls himself Charicles, appeared, followed by his charming daughter. At the sight of my submarine boat he seemed profoundly astonished, and at first hardly knew what he ought to do. But very soon the sentiment of hospitality swallowed up his fear of the unknown, and he stepped towards the windlass of the lock and turned it with a hand and arm that were still vigourous. Slowly the movable wall of the upper chamber opened in front of the *Titania*, which floated in it after three turns of the screw. At once the rack came into operation in an inverse manner, so as to shut the upper doors, while the lower doors opened, in their turn, to allow the sea water to flow into the lower basin. The *Titania* sank into it also, and found herself inclosed in this temporary prison. Then the basin emptied itself, my boat rested dry on the fine sand of the floor, and the glass doors which separated me from the conservatory sliding along their grooves, I judged that the moment had arrived for throwing back the folding-doors of my cabin. You have seen at Brest how promptly this is done.

"My sudden appearance, rising from the cockpit, closely resembled that of a Jack-in-the-box, the toy we and our nurses used to delight in as children. It appeared to have a very startling effect on the old man of the sea. No doubt his

surprise and anger were too much for him, when he recognized, in his unexpected visitor, the same intruder whom he had so promptly dismissed on a previous occasion. Any way, he stood transfixed for a moment, uttered a few disjointed words, and then fell suddenly back in a heap on the floor. With his daughter and Kermadec I hastened to his assistance, for he had lost consciousness. It did not take us long to carry him to an adjoining room and lay him on the very couch upon which I had once rested. But our efforts to bring him back to consciousness were powerless. His daughter bemoaned him in a musical language which is a dialect of ancient Greece, as I had presumed. I did my best to encourage her, while assisting her in restoring the old man, but could not succeed in either. What can I say, my dear Stephen? For ten days Kermadec and I have been here, and the master of the house has not recovered his senses. Atlantis is at last convinced that, though I was the involuntary cause of this misfortune, at least, I am sparing nothing to repair it. We have succeeded in exchanging a few words. I have told her that I have come again solely to see her, and she has given me to understand that the remembrance of my first visit is always present with her.

"Her old father and she are the last living representatives of the ancient race of the Atlantes. I am told that at an epoch, lost in the night of ages, their ancestors, refusing to leave their native soil, which was slowly being inundated by the waters of the Atlantic, had called to their aid all the resources of a science already far advanced in refinement, to struggle against the ocean, and to create for themselves in its depths an artificial existence. In fact, nothing on earth resembles this habitation, modelled and contrived in all its parts by the hand of man. Light, air, food, clothing,—there is nothing here that has not been provided by artistic ingenuity

and dexterity. Animal and vegetable life even is in defiance of all natural laws.

"The duration and constancy of the struggle seem to have resulted in the highest possible development of the creative and productive powers of this submerged race. But, nevertheless, they have gradually had the worst of it in the struggle, since the race is now reduced to two individuals, Charicles and his daughter. But the results obtained in the course of long centuries are not the less wonderful. Nothing can equal the lordly splendour of the enchanted gardens where I am living, in a dream, near to Atlantis. You will think so, my dear Stephen, if you will join me here, — for the service I ask of your friendship for me, and which I am sure you will not refuse me, is to come and bring the help of your professional experience to him whom my advent has rendered unconscious. Adieu. Kermadec will give you ample details. Give my love to my mother and Hélène, and I shall expect you.

"RENÉ."

"He expects me, does he? That is easy to say," exclaimed the doctor, as he finished his friend's letter. "But how in the world does he think I am to get to his invalid's bedside?"

"In the same way that we did, sir, by the *Titania*, to be sure!"

"Is she here, then?"

"Yes, sir, that is to say, I have moored her just outside the harbour mouth in a little cove I know very well, that of Porzleogan, near Cape St. Matthew. A boat to be proud of, and no mistake! But, look you, my officer desires that no one shall

know it is there. I am not to tell to the gossips what he has seen down there, but he has sent me with news of himself to his mother and his cousin, who are ladies of the right sort, and no mistake."

"And do you think I am going to set out on such a mad errand?"

"That is your affair, sir, your affair, not mine. My officer told me to come, and I have come. I can only say he is looking out for you, and the sooner we can leave, the better. He is so afraid of not seeing you directly you get near, that he has fixed up a bell at the entrance of the lock."

"What, a bell?"

"Just that; an electric bell that rings a peal loud enough to wake the dead. I tell you, we had something to do, both of us, to get it fixed. But now, it is very convenient. When you arrive at the water-gate, you will find an ivory button under your nose. You have only to touch it with the end of the india-rubber arm, and — whirr-rr-rr! the peal of bells is set agoing and the sluice opens in front of you. How 's that for a swagger invention? Ha, ha! he is no fool, my master!"

"What rot; the whole thing is absurd, unheard-of," exclaimed the doctor, in great agitation. "What can René be thinking of? As if I had the time to go on such a wild goose chase!"

The sailor rightly considering that these remarks were not addressed to him, said nothing in reply.

"Well," said the doctor, after thinking for a minute or two, "let us go, at any rate, and relieve Madame Caoudal's anxiety about him whom she thought never to hear of again. After that, we will see. But of all the crack-brained fellows I ever came across, René is, unquestionably, the champion."

And, with very mixed feelings, he sought an interview with Madame Caoudal.

CHAPTER XIII.

DOCTOR PATRICE'S REFLECTIONS.

After he had recovered from the first feeling of astonishment and repugnance, and the objections that he had instinctively made to René's proposal, Patrice came by degrees to look with more favourable eyes on the submarine expedition, which at first seemed to him so extravagant. There was no doubt, at all events, of the authenticity of Kermadec's story. A few months ago, when he found René on his hospital bed, his professional examination of him forbade his admitting for a moment the hypothesis of insanity; and now, Kermadec's loyalty could not be questioned. Besides, this second aspect of the surprising drama was much more easy to believe in, once the first was accepted; indeed, the worthy Kermadec appeared to be very much at his ease among the marvels he spoke of, — these frantic divings to the bottom of the sea, excursions in the gardens of the enchanted palace, and, above all, the privilege of seeing these quasi-divine personages, of speaking to them, of being admitted to a sort of intimacy with them. All

this tended to pique the doctor's curiosity, and rouse within him the spirit of adventure.

"And why," ruminated he, "when an opportunity like this offers itself to enlarge the field of my experience, should I let it slip through my fingers? I, who am pledged by my profession to augment to the utmost of my power the knowledge of human nature; to struggle against the darkness which surrounds us on all sides, which hides from us so much of the cause and the effect of things; and, what touches us still more closely, the darkness which obscures the facts which are at our very feet, the history, the condition of a race, related to our own. Why should I miss the only chance I may ever have of raising a corner of the veil which hides so much that is mysterious? What is to stop me, after all? Fear? Never!"

Patrice could sound his own heart on this point, and only did himself justice when he told himself that he had no fear at running the risk; he knew as well as Caoudal and Kermadec how to face the terrors of the sea. If he had had a family, or any near relatives, he might hesitate. But who would wear mourning, if Patrice disappeared from this world? To be sure, Madame Caoudal would shed a tear for him, his friends would sincerely regret him; but was it that which made him pause? No, he did not conceal from himself, now that a great

question had forced him to look facts in the face, and to make a long-deferred examination of his conscience, that that which held him back, and made him shrink from embarking on the expedition, was the extreme unwillingness he felt at parting from Hélène, the involuntary protest of his whole being against bidding her what might prove to be an eternal adieu. All these late events, and the many emotions they had in common, had drawn them more than ever together; and, while never departing from his stoical resolve to keep silent, the young doctor had had many opportunities of realizing how much it cost him to do so; and his high-souled and amiable demeanour, his boundless devotion, had, unknown to himself, pleaded his cause. So much so, that Mademoiselle Rieux had come to feel giving way within her the fierce intention of ignoring him that she had so decidedly declared to Mademoiselle Luzan. That she was on the point of inverting the order of things, and, like Queen Victoria, proposing marriage to the man of her choice, certainly could hardly be said. For although she was above thinking of the miserable question of fortune which stood between herself and the man she had chosen, she had too just a sense of womanly dignity to so demean herself. But since marriages are said to be made in heaven, she could well leave matters to take their course. She had

sworn, it is true, that she would never make any advances, but she was not obliged to be forever snubbing him. Nothing could prevent her manner being charming when with him, just as it was with Harancourt, Bruyères, and many others.

In fact, did it not imply a preference for him, that she was more reserved with him than with ordinary acquaintances,—him an old, tried friend? Truly, she had been wanting in tact, she would hasten to repair the mistake; and, by showing herself uniformly natural, try to prove that her heart was free. And, fortified with this reasoning, Hélène resumed her old manner with him, was graciously friendly and simple as of old; so that ten times a day he found himself on the point of throwing to the winds the nightmare of her fortune, and courageously asking the all-important question.

This is how matters stood. It was evidently time for him to put on the drag. The sooner the better, and René's invitation came just in time to prevent him from committing himself. He would start at once, whatever it cost him. He had always been very practical, and for him to decide upon a thing was to do it; so he told Kermadec briefly that he was ready to embark with him. The sailor received the announcement with apparent surprise, and the doctor, having dismissed him for a few hours, hastened to Madame Caoudal's.

He made use of all the tact and discretion that the most affectionate delicacy could suggest, to mitigate the shock the happy mother was likely to feel at the astonishing news he had to communicate. No words could do justice to the joy, admiration, and ecstacy she manifested on hearing of René's extraordinary exploits, in reading over and over again his handwriting, in assuring herself that he was alive and that she would see him again. In the tempest of joyful emotion which succeeded her desolate grief, all her old hostility to the mysterious world that had attracted her child was swept away as if by enchantment. All her antipathy to the majestic old man and his daughter gave place to the most sincere interest, and the liveliest gratitude. They had shown hospitality to her son, and had kept him alive; him, whom she had never thought to see again. Evidently she had not done them justice; she had given way to prejudice, had been a slave to that narrow-mindedness which makes us suspicious of everything that lies outside the beaten track. Yes, yes, they must take care of this venerable old man and do their best to preserve his life for the sake of his daughter! Ah, did she not know, only too well, what it was to lose the support and protection of one's dear ones! And how generous it was of Stephen to offer to go at once, with as little fuss as if he were called from Lorient to Brest! There

was no one in the world like him, his devotion was beyond all praise. But she knew him before to-day. Was he not her child, just as much as René and Hélène?

And so the happy woman's tongue ran on. She looked ten years younger already. She seemed transfigured, and more than once, while she was pouring her heart out, Doctor Patrice and Mademoiselle Rieux exchanged meaning glances.

"And you, my sweet child," she said, suddenly, smoothing Hélène's hair caressingly, as she sat on a stool, leaning her head on her aunt's knee, "you seem very silent. Do you think, you sly little thing, that I have not seen how you have always taken the part of your harebrained cousin? Ah, you can boast openly now of our René's fidelity and tenacity; and it is not I who will contradict you! And our dear doctor, — have you not a word of gratitude, of admiration, for his courage? Think of it! Going to shut himself up, though he is not a sailor, in that fragile torpedo-boat, to plunge bravely to the bottom of the sea, to expose himself to unprecedented risks, and all to tend a fellow man and to see an old friend!"

"Do not say too much on that score, auntie," interrupted Hélène, raising her head with a mischievous look in her bright eyes. "My modesty forbids me to listen to praises of merit I wish to share."

"What do you say?" cried Madame Caoudal, while the doctor waited in silence for what might come next.

"Simply this. I should like, with your permission, to trust myself to the torpedo-boat, descend to the bottom of the gulf, see the wonderful palace, embrace dear René, and, if she will accept my help, join the charming Undine in obeying the orders of the doctor and restoring the old man to health."

"You are dreaming, or joking. You cannot mean what you say!" cried Madame Caoudal, utterly confounded.

"Not mean what I say!" cried Hélène, whose charming face took on an expression of wilful energy. "My dear aunt, from the bottom of my heart I beg your leave to join Doctor Patrice in finding René and bringing him news of those he loves."

"Impossible, impossible, my child," said Madame Caoudal, much agitated at the sudden conviction that Hélène was indeed not joking.

"Why impossible, dear aunt?"

"My dear, such a thing has never been done."

"Everything needs a beginning, Aunt Alice."

"I never will allow you to go to the bottom of the sea, and run such fearful risks!"

"Did not René go, and did he not come back safe and sound?"

"Oh, he!" said the mother, with a proud look in her eyes.

"And Kermadec?"

"He is a sailor."

"And the doctor," added Hélène, whose fun never lay dormant long; "you consent, then, to let him expose himself to perils too terrible for me?"

"Oh, you little tease!" cried Madame Caoudal, discomfited, while Patrice protested, smiling:

"That is quite a different thing, mademoiselle."

"Prove it! I maintain, on the contrary, that for you, for me, for all, in short, who will be simply passengers on board the *Titania*, the risks are the same. Take me, or take a Hercules with you as companion. If he and I are equally ignorant in the art of managing the torpedo-boat, we shall be equally useless, and, in case of an accident, his strength and my weakness will be found to be two quantities, not equal, but equivalent."

"That is all very well, but it is mere cavilling, or I am much mistaken," said Madame Caoudal, much displeased. "But tell me, mademoiselle, do you think it would be a proper thing for you to travel alone, without a chaperone?"

"Without a chaperone, but not without protection," replied Hélène, with a frank look that went straight to the doctor's heart. "And I ask you who could serve me as chaperone in this adventure? Old

nurse, or your maid, or any other dignitary of your household? I think they would cut but a poor figure; and it would be better for me to go as a body-guard to the doctor, who, by the way, has said nothing by way of suggestion, and who appears to receive without enthusiasm the idea of having me as travelling companion."

The doctor was thrown into considerable perplexity by this unexpected thrust, and could n't help laughing inwardly at the recollection that it was on purpose to get away from Hélène that he had hastened his decision. He did not, however, defend himself from the accusation that she had launched at him.

"You can hardly be aware," said he, calmly, "how far I should be from thinking of taking you, having come for the express purpose of telling you my plans."

Hélène was far too penetrating not to divine, at least partly, what was hidden in this apparent incivility. "I will believe all you could wish on that score," said she, with equal calmness; "but since you have anticipated my request, I ask you, will you take me?"

"With great pleasure, if Madame Caoudal wishes it."

"My dear children, what are you thinking of?" put in the elder lady. "Do you believe, in good

faith, that I could consent to such folly? I will never let Hélène go out of my care, never,—except in the case of some one stronger than I taking her away," she added, smiling. Then, resuming a serious, not to say severe, tone:

"Doctor, I am surprised that you should entertain for one moment anything so unreasonable!"

"He certainly has not given much encouragement in it, I must do him justice in that," said Hélène, while Patrice scolded himself for the disappointment he felt, forcing himself, as usual, to reveal nothing of his feelings.

"Oh, dear auntie, good auntie," continued Hélène, now in tears, and burying her face in her hands, "please do not speak so decidedly! My heart will break if you refuse me."

"Hélène, I hardly know you," said Madame Caoudal, reproachfully. "You, who have always been my strength and support; one would think you were a spoilt child, crying for the moon! It is only an hour since you learned of the existence of this wonderful place, and here you are in despair because the entrance to it is refused you! I repeat, I do not recognize my sensible, reasonable Hélène!"

"Ah, my dear aunt," burst forth Hélène, "it is not the dream of an hour, it is the dream of my whole life, that I thought I had realized! I am a born sailor, you know that well! I am always hear-

ing the clamour of the waves which rocked my father and grandfather, and I am always homesick for the sea. With what regret, what bitter mortification, did I see René depart and leave me on shore! Till then I had hoped that I might one day go on one of those beautiful, free, stirring voyages. Do not think that I am ungrateful to those who love me. Is René the less your son, and a good son, because he loves the sea? Is he less perfect, — as a friend? But why should I need to plead with you, who know me so well? You know us both; and, as the daughter of sea-going people, I have been marked with their seal, I am always irresistibly drawn to everything belonging to them, their dangers and their triumphs. I can truly say that I have lived with René in this audacious adventure of his; he has confided to me all his anxieties, his hopes, and his sudden turns of fortune; and if he had not, I verily believe I should have guessed them, I have so much identified myself with his life. Just now, when the doctor told us that he intended to go to him, I felt such an irresistible longing to follow that it seemed as if my wish was to be granted. Aunt Alice, dear auntie, do not refuse me!"

"My dear child," replied Madame Caoudal, irresolute, and quite overcome, "what can I say to you? — Stephen, come to my help."

The doctor was pacing the room, he, too, much

moved at Hélène's pleading, and beginning to think that what she longed for so ardently might, after all, be right and feasible.

"What can I say, madame," said he, pausing in front of her, "and how can I attack the question unarmed? In order to help you, as you ask me, it is necessary to be convinced that Mademoiselle Hélène's project is out of the question."

"What! You, also?" ejaculated Madame Caoudal, dumbfounded, "this must be a conspiracy?"

"Not in the least," said the doctor. "A moment ago, I was as far as you from admitting the possibility of a delicate young girl, or even a man of doubtful courage, embarking on such a hazardous enterprise. I had almost come to take credit to myself for courage," he said, frankly, "for an act, so natural, and with so little of the heroic about it, of setting foot on board a vessel so admirably equipped in every way, and allowing myself to be taken, without a hitch or a jar of any kind, towards a region that would tempt the most *blasé* traveller. Everything outside the usual routine of life is apt to astonish us; but Mademoiselle Hélène's absolute confidence and absence of hesitation has opened my eyes. In this torpedo-boat, constructed under the direction of a mind of the first order, we should be really safer than even here, under a roof built by an ignorant architect, and of whose stability we know

nothing; while of René's movable house, which is perfection of its kind, we know everything. In short, madame, Mademoiselle Hélène's argument, urged just now partly in joke, has a good deal in it. Be very sure of one thing, that since René has asked me to go to him in his boat, he has satisfied himself, at the risk of his life, that there will be no danger for other people."

"Oh, doctor!" cried Hélène, delighted, "how true all that is! You are good! How much I thank you!"

"I see the force of what you say," said Madame Caoudal, "but still there remains the question of the propriety of the thing—of etiquette, if you will. Hélène cannot go alone with you."

"Oh, Aunt Alice!" cried Hélène, "that tiresome etiquette! What English or American girl would hesitate to do it? and small blame to her, either."

"The English and Americans have their manners and we have ours," said Madame Caoudal. "Far be it from me to blame any young girls who conform straightforwardly, and with their parents' consent, to the established customs of their own countries. But it never does for any one, least of all a woman, to go against the established code of society. I would not take the responsibility of it, in any case, my dear little woman, though it cost me the pain of saying 'No' to you."

Hélène sat thoughtful for a minute. "Why should n't you come with us?" she said, suddenly.

"I? What nonsense!"

"Why not?" said Hélène, simply. "Don't you want to go?"

"Want to go, little puss! You seem to think it very easy for one to do what one wants, in this world."

"One can, if one puts one's will to it," said Hélène, with a quick movement of her pretty head, "and if what one wants is good and legitimate in itself. Now, see, auntie, dear, you are convinced that the expedition has no serious danger attached to it, since, but for the sake of appearances, you would let me undertake it; and, what you do not fear for me, you would be a thousand times less likely to fear for yourself. And think of it, dearest, the decision once arrived at, the first step taken, all would be perfectly easy, and, in five or six days, or so, you would see your René, and clasp him in your arms."

"Ah, my child, what are you saying to me. It is too beautiful," cried the mother, trembling. "Stephen, is it possible, or are we all losing our senses?"

"No, dear lady. It is only that we have to get accustomed to any idea, the novelty of which has confounded us. Mademoiselle Hélène is quite right. She has hit upon the right thing."

"The idea of setting out on such an adventure at my age!"

"Your age!" said Hélène, indignantly. "Your age is nothing, unless it be that of the most charming woman in France."

"Very good," said Madame Caoudal, laughing. "The truth is I am perfectly strong; and I feel sure you would have no difficulty on my account; but still —"

"Let us go and have a look at the *Titania*, will you?" interrupted the doctor; "perhaps the examination of it would decide you."

"That is a good idea," cried the lady, who, having once entertained the idea of seeing her son in a few days, was now easy to convince.

They set out in high spirits, and drove to the little creek where the boat was moored. Its interior was passed in review. As has been said, it was most comfortable, and capable of accommodating six people. Their admiration of this *chef-d'œuvre* which did so much honour to René's inventive genius was unstinted. Madame Caoudal, who was now keener than any one to get matters settled, declared that there would be nothing absurd in taking a voyage in such a vessel. In a few hours, the light luggage of the travellers was packed, and put on board. They all agreed that there would be nothing gained by telling any one the secret of the expedition.

Kermadec, never surprised at anything, saw the ladies arrive with perfect serenity. As soon as they had installed themselves, the doctor gave the signal to start, and the *Titania* was headed for the Azores.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHARICLES AND RENÉ.

MEANWHILE, the venerable Charicles was still lying motionless on his couch in the crystal mansion, the consequence of the sudden attack which had prostrated him on René's arrival. The indefatigable young people by his side eagerly endeavoured by the most affectionate care to restore him to health, — Atlantis, for the love she bore him, and René, it must be confessed, on her account. And, yet, it was not solely for her sake, after all; this grand old man, so majestic, so mysterious, interested him. He had wished to sound the secret of his existence, to see the mute lips unseal themselves and reveal to him the strange recollections that must be hidden by the massive brow and the commanding gray eyes of which he had sometimes a momentary glimpse. And then, besides the natural curiosity of any one who might have found himself in the position of the young officer, a real sympathy for the invalid awoke in him.

"After all," thought René, "one should put oneself in the old man's place, and if he elected

to plant his dwelling at the bottom of the sea, it must have been because he did not wish to be intruded upon. And here I am, dropped from the sky into his retreat; I have established myself here, making myself as much at home as if I were in my own house, and taking the care of him upon myself. All that is enough to exasperate him, I must confess. I must seem to him like a meddlesome intruder, to whom he would like to show the door. And yet, on the other hand, how could I leave this young girl in the sole charge of him? Would she wish it? I doubt it; she must prefer to have some one to help her in such trying circumstances. Well, I believe I am right in running the risk, and I shall stay. He may turn me out when he recovers — if he dares!"

While René reasoned thus, still unremitting in his attentions, Charicles hardly took his eyes off him. This penetrating, severe, scrutinizing look remained fixed on the frank and open face of the young man, seeming, apparently, to mark its most fleeting expression. For five days and nights he studied thus the face of his improvised Æsculapius, and certainly, if René had not had a very clear conscience, he must have been tired of this persistent observation. But, thanks to his happy disposition and the perfect purity of his motives, he showed no impatience, and continued to show him such chivalrous devotion

that, at last, the old man's choler seemed somewhat appeased.

One evening, when René and Atlantis had been for some time endeavouring to prepare a lotion by the help of which they might bring back animation to his rigid limbs, and René had been rubbing him for an hour, he suddenly had the unexpected pleasure and satisfaction of seeing a softened light in his patient's eyes. He looked towards Atlantis, and, opening his lips with difficulty, said painfully, but distinctly, in his archaic Greek:

"This stranger cares for me like a son."

René coloured with pleasure.

"Bravo!" cried he. "You can speak. You are feeling stronger. Now we shall have you well in no time. Mademoiselle Atlantis, I congratulate you upon the result of your good nursing. Your father will be on his feet again in a few hours, on the faith of René Caoudal."

At the sound of her father's voice, Atlantis rose to her feet, blushing with happiness. She threw herself into his arms, uttering a torrent of sweet and harmonious exclamations. René decided that Greek was certainly the most beautiful language in the world.

When the first flutter of agitation had subsided, Charicles's wrinkled brow became smooth; so sweet it is to feel oneself loved, even if one be a venerable Triton. He gave them to understand that for sev-

eral days he had felt the power of speech coming back, but he had waited to be quite sure, for fear of raising false hopes. And now, having thoroughly studied René during the long speechless hours, he was convinced that he had to do with a worthy youth, whose heart was frank and pure, and, in order to prove the confidence he felt in him, he would tell him of a powerful philtre, which would accelerate the cure.

Atlantis flew to stir the flame under a gold tripod near by, and René measured, mixed, and shook a compound of a bitter taste and indescribable odour, which the old man swallowed at one draught, murmuring an invocation in a language which sounded to René even more archaic than that which he had used just before in speaking to them. This done, the old man sank back upon the gold-embroidered cushion, and remained perfectly rigid for an hour, his long white robes looking more like a winding-sheet than anything else. At the end of that time, he signified by an imperious gesture to René, who was waiting beside him, that he wished for another dose.

During the night, which René and Atlantis spent at his side, he continually asked for his philtre, for which René was very sorry, as he found that the flavour of it was more and more nauseous. And alas! their hopes of a speedy recovery were disap-

pointed. Atlantis understood nothing about it. At first, when the old man expressed a wish to take it, she clapped her hands with joy.

"The potion of the ancients!" she cried, with her clear voice. "That will cure you, dear father; it will bring back your strength, and renew in you the fire of youth!"

Convinced that in a few hours he would be quite restored, she was the more cast down at seeing him so inert, his eyebrows so contracted, and the distressed look in his eyes, while his panting breathing hardly stirred the silky waves of his white beard.

"He is no better," said the poor, desolate Undine, raising her clear blue eyes towards René.

"I must have made some mistake in mixing the medicine," replied René, baffled; "or perhaps the ingredients were stale, and had lost their virtue; or perhaps they never were of any use for such a case."

Atlantis shook her head.

"Charicles chose well the elements for his potion; he is learned in this art, as in all others. But, if the gods do not wish to cure him, no philtre will have any power over the evil. May the immortals have pity on me, his unhappy child, if I am to see him expire, without being able to help him!"

And tears, like diamonds, shone in her gray-blue eyes, while their expression of filial piety only added to her loveliness in René eyes.

"Dear daughter," murmured the old man, "do not grieve, child of my heart. If the gods will it, I shall regain my health, and, in any case, I thank them for having brought hither this young stranger, worthy, by his outward as well as his mental gifts, to be thy brother. See how afflicted he is; he feels thy grief, and would give me his strength if he could. All honour to him who knows how to respect old age! Perhaps he has a father, and thinks he recognizes one in me. Ask him, my daughter; learn from him under what heaven he first saw the light, by what chance he penetrated our dwelling. I will gladly listen, and without fatigue, and while opening my understanding to new ideas, I will await patiently the accomplishment of my destiny."

Atlantis and René set to work to arrange the old man's couch more comfortably, raising his head and moistening his lips and brow with a fragrant balm from a phial of exquisite shape. Atlantis placed herself near to him with one hand resting on his, and the other supporting her chin, her elbow on her knee, and, fixing her eyes on René:

"Speak, stranger," said she; "explain to us whom thou art, whence thou comest, and of what race thou art, and tell us thy history. Charicles and his daughter are listening to thee. And do not forget that they who come from afar have need to guard

their lips, so that they utter no words but those of truth. May the strictest sincerity govern you! We, poor recluses, isolated from the world, will listen to thee with respect, and may we draw from thy discourse the teaching and light we so much need!"

The liveliest approval of these sage words of his daughter was depicted in Charicles's face, as René, with a bow and a smile, began his account of himself:

"You see in me," began the young officer, somewhat abashed at being obliged to bring his personality so much to the front, "the son of a race doubtless unknown to you, for I presume, from all I see around me, that centuries have passed since the people of your nation have had the least intercourse with the outside world, — with ours, for instance?" The old man made a sign of assent. "But," continued René, "have you never heard of a Greek colony, founded by your ancestors, called by the name of Phœnicia?"

"I know Phœnicia," said Charicles; "dost thou come from that famous town, young man? Art thou our fellow countryman, a sort of distant cousin?"

"Fellow countryman? that would be going a long way back," replied René, smiling; "but at least we have, no doubt, not altogether uncommon origin. It is certain that you, as we, belonged to the great family which learned men call Indo-European. The various nations springing from this source come from

a people who originally inhabited the elevated plateau of central Asia. You do not need to be told by me that at a far distant period, long before the historic ages, this race emigrated and spread itself over a vast region of Asia and Europe. In Asia they were the parents of the Hindoos, who spoke Sanscrit; the Medes and Persians, who spoke Zend, were the other branch of the stock. In Europe, we find four principal races: the Germans, the Pelasgi, the Slavs, and the Celts. You are not ignorant of the fact that in ancient times the country which we call Greece, after the manner of the Romans, and which you doubtless know by the name of Hellas (from the name of the founder Hellen), was called at that time Pelasgia. Attica, and still more Arcadia, boasted of the nobility of their origin, and prided themselves on being branches of the only Pelasgic stock. It was the Pelasgi who spread themselves in the greatest numbers over Italy, the southern part of which country, from the number and importance of your colonies in it, being known for a long time by the name of Greater Greece. The Pelasgic language helped, consequently, to form the root of the Latin language, as did also that of the Greeks. I enlarge thus upon these details in order to show you that we have, indeed, a common origin, and that we are all branches of the same trunk, but with different degrees of culture."

"I listen to thee with interest, stranger," said Charicles; "wisdom pours from thy youthful lips. But, I beseech thee, tell me of the Phœnician city of which thou didst but now pronounce the name."

"You know the origin of Phœnicia, founded by your illustrious compatriots, the Phœnicians of Ionia, two thousand one hundred years ago. Your merchants, speeding their frail barks along the Mediterranean, quickly recognized how much there was to be gained on our southern coasts. And yet, what dangers they ran! What snares were set for them! The Phœnician colony existed only by a miracle. On land, they were surrounded by powerful Gallic and Ligurian tribes, who fought for every inch of ground which they tried to gain. By sea, they encountered enormous Carthaginian or Etruscan fleets, which pitilessly massacred every stranger engaged in commerce with Sardinia. But your immortals protected them, doubtless, for everything favoured the Marsellais (the name by which at the present time the Phœnicians are known) without their having to draw the sword. The Syracusans destroyed Etruscan navigation, and Rome finished by absorbing all the commercial States. Carthage, Etruria, and Sicily succumbed. The Phœnicians would gladly have taken the place of Carthage, for which they seemed fitted by their economic and mercantile genius; but, not daring to aspire so

high, they contented themselves with civilizing the *barbarians* (as they called my ancestors) in their immediate neighbourhood, and with founding numerous settlements along the Mediterranean coast from the Maritime Alps to Cape St. Martin, that is to say, as far as the first Carthaginian colonies.

"If you ask me now what the people were like who inhabited the region to the north of the Phœnician colony, the people from whom I am descended, I will describe them to you by the mouth of an ancient historian.* 'The character of the Gallic race, according to the philosopher, Posidonius, is irritable and warlike, always ready to strike, but withal simple and without malignity; if they are irritated, they attack a foe straight in the face, without thinking of anything else. But one can always succeed with them by strategy; one can at any time provoke them to combat, however unimportant the motives leading up to it may be; they are always ready, even without any weapons, save those of strength and audacity. Nothwithstanding, they are easily induced to learn useful things; they are susceptible of culture and literary instruction. Strong in their powerful physique and in their numbers, they quickly assemble in bands; and, simple and spontaneous as they are, willingly take in hand the cause of the oppressed.' That is

* Strabo.

one of the first judgments passed upon my race by philosophy."

"A fine trait, the last," said Charicles, nodding his venerable head, "*taking in hand the cause of the oppressed.* That is a characteristic worthy of admiration."

"And one that has been true all through my country's glorious history," said René, with a proud light in his eyes. "Yes, I can truly say that no nation has played the part of leader as mine has done. Always in the van of light and liberty, France has been the enlightener of the world, and there is not a generous idea, but has found an echo among her people. She has replaced Greece in the mission of civilization."

"Replaced!" quickly interrupted Charicles. "Has Hellas then disappeared?"

"From a political point of view, yes. That cannot be denied. Her greatness, which radiated over ancient civilization, and whose influence governs us to this day, became extinct under the domination of Rome, about a hundred and forty-five years before our era. But what incomparable brilliancy was shown by the people of that small territory! Science, the arts, war, — the Greeks excelled in all. To this day, we are lost in admiration at the contemplation of what was wrought by their hand, their pen, and their powerful and cultivated intellect. You cannot

have heard, Charicles, of the marvellous sons your country has produced. Perhaps you do not even know the name of Phidias, or of Euripides, of Socrates, Aristotle, or Plato? Well, we moderns of the civilized world base our principal studies upon their works. He who ignores them is considered to be wanting in culture, a sort of Helot. You find nowhere else more beautiful creations of art than those of Greece. They are copied, admired, venerated. They are equalled sometimes, but never surpassed, for they have attained to perfection of every kind."

"Thy words are very precious, young man, and cheer me like generous wine," exclaimed Charicles, with energy. "And see how moved Atlantis is also; she drinks in thy discourse, and feels proud of her race."

"Yes," said Atlantis, "it is sweet to me to hear the praises of my nation, stranger, although it is cruel to learn that she has fallen. We know nothing of her ancient glory, but the poems of the great Homer. Tell me, do people still read them? Hast thou ever read them, traced on silky papyrus; dost thou know the king of men, Agamemnon; and Helen, more beautiful than Aphrodite, and the traitor, Paris?"

"And Ajax, and Hector, and Ulysses, and old Nestor! Have I not dug out their roots on the

school forms!" cried René, laughing. "Yes, I know them, less than I ought to, no doubt, but it is in studying the divine Homer that the youth of my nation spend the greater part of their school days. We have learned men who examine into his writings all their life long, and there must be a whole library of books written on his poem."

"Doubtless, you have none of them, you barbarians," said Atlantis, simply.

"We have some, certainly," said René, somewhat piqued, "and if you will accept me as French master, I will make them known to you, fair Atlantis. But I confess we have no poet to equal Sophocles or Euripides, neither has sculptor of ours ever surpassed the divine Phidias; and yet, ours are the best in the world."

"And how is it that you have reached this pre-eminence?" continued Atlantis with interest. "Are you our direct inheritors? Is it through the Phœnicians that you have learnt our secrets?"

"It would take rather long to explain to you," said René. "However, I will try." And, adapting himself to the comprehension of his auditor, the young officer called to his aid all his acquaintance with ethnological, scientific, artistic, and historical lore, and, after having described to them the Gallic, Frank, and Breton characteristics, he took up the chief threads of the world's history, from the time

when they seemed to have lost them, which appeared to date from about the time of the foundation of Phœnicia, that is to say, about six hundred years before our era.

It was a lengthy task; but, curious and attentive, the two solitary beings were unwilling to lose a single thread in the weaving of events; and if their improvised teacher had spoken all night long, he would have been listened to with the same interest. Fatigued, at last, with his long lecture, René, who had conducted them as far as the state of Europe in 189—, paused out of breath, and a long, thoughtful silence reigned among them.

Charicles was the first to break it. "All that thou hast taught me has astonished me much, young stranger," said he at length. "What marvels, what events, what vicissitudes! O my country, thou that wert of small extent in the world, and yet so great by the majesty of thy genius, blessed be thou! I must die without ever having pressed my lips to thy sacred soil; but before descending to Hades, I bless the gods for having brought this stranger, who has revealed to me thy greatness and thy glory. I should like, stranger, to give thee the history of my race, to make thee understand how it comes about that we are here, but I am overcome with fatigue. My limbs are heavy, and my tongue inert and useless. Let Atlantis take my place and instruct thee; her har-

monious voice will charm thee, while she will lull to rest my last hours in this world. Speak, dear child, and we will listen, reverencing in thee the triple majesty of beauty, innocence and knowledge! Forget nothing that can instruct this young man, and, while giving him the story after thine own manner, let the polished mirror of strict truth preside over the threshold of thy lips. Speak, and may Pallas dictate thy words."

Atlantis bowed her head modestly to her father; then, without waiting to be asked a second time, "I obey thee, noble Charicles," said she. "And thou, stranger, be indulgent, if my lips, still young and inexperienced, err sometimes in my story. Charicles has taught me all I know. If my words please and interest thee, to him be all the honour."

CHAPTER XV.

THE STORY OF ATLANTIS.

"WHAT I am about to relate to thee, stranger, and to thee, father, is a very ancient tradition. It reaches back among the years as far as two or three thousand lustra. I give it to thee as I have received it from Charicles's venerable lips, who himself learnt it from those of his noble father, Antigoras. In his turn he received it from his father, and so on, back through the night of ages. Often, since the time when my childish head hardly reached his knee, he guided my finger, while I spelt on the papyrus the ancient traditions of our ancestors.

"At first, our fathers lived on earth, even as yours; and the bottom of the sea, unknown to human eyes, was inhabited only by the monsters of the deep, Tritons and sea-nymphs. Our country was then a vast continent extending beyond the Pillars of Hercules, in the direction of newly discovered territory, named as thou hast told us, America. It was one of those colonies of which thou hast spoken, young man. But how flourishing! To what a degree of power you must have attained,

oh, my ancestors, in the arts of peace and war! Thou speakest of Phidias, of Scopas, of Praxiteles. I do not know what they did. But, before seeing the *chefs-d'œuvre* shaped by their chisels, I should hardly bring myself to confess that they could do better than our masters, whose memories we piously retain, whose masterpieces have been copied by our decorative painters.

"Imbued with the pure traditions of Egyptian art, — for the learned and skilful among our ancestors, who came from the ancient land of Isis, had taken care to form their taste and guide their hand, — they created fresh wonders every day. In their free cities magnificent temples were reared and consecrated to the gods.

"Life flowed on serene and majestic. This liberty of which thou hast spoken, as a blessing worth shedding rivers of blood to secure, — the only good worth living for, as my father has taught me from my cradle, — we possessed without fighting for. The most humble among us had rights observed by all, and he respected those of the greatest of his nation. The earth, young and fruitful, produced in abundance all the food required by her happy children. The air was pure, bright, and balmy. Oh, Charicles, we have often envied these happy mortals the light of Phœbus, the great blue heaven above their head, shady forests, snow-capped mountains hiding their

heads among the clouds! Neither thou nor I could know the delight of breathing the vivifying air of our native land. And yet, can we complain? What a marvel is our existence here! What a proof of the prodigious genius of our ancestors! Thou art a witness to it, stranger.

"Toward the middle of the twentieth Olympiad, during the rule of Aclepios, the happiness of the people of Atlantide was suddenly troubled by a terrible catastrophe. One morning Phœbus appeared, his face troubled, surrounded by lightning clouds. Then a ruddy cloud covered him entirely; an angry wind arose, and thunder was heard in the blackened sky. Every one with suppliant hands raised to heaven invoked the gods; but the sea waves, agitated with a convulsive movement, surged up in the port, as if unknown monsters of the deep were trying to escape from them. Portentous sounds were heard from a neighbouring mountain. For several days — a frightful phenomenon — its summit opened, and vomited volumes of black, tainted smoke. Suddenly, a sheaf of flame shot forth and rose to the clouds, which dissolved in torrents of rain. Down the sides of the mountain rushed torrents of red-hot lava, which burnt and destroyed the houses nestling on its verdant slopes. At the same time horrible crashing noises were heard underground, under the feet of the horrified inhabitants who were taking flight.

The earth opened and melted away, carrying with it thousands of people. On all sides the ground was torn asunder, uprooted trees strewed the ground, temples and dwellings fell to pieces with a crash,—and the heavens rained flames which burned the monuments which the cataclysm had spared. Huge sea waves submerged the coast, and absorbed and drowned all who sought to escape in that direction!

The scourge lasted for many days. At last the elements calmed their rage; and, when the terrified people reckoned up their disasters, they perceived that the isthmus which had united Atlantide to the African continent no longer existed. A wide strait, a sea still convulsed with surging waves, replaced it, and what had been an enormous peninsula was from that time forward a sea-girt isle. As the days wore on those thus cut off were mourned by their friends left behind. Those who had met their death in the cataclysm, and whose disfigured bodies strewed the ground, were piously collected together. An immense funeral pile was erected on the newly formed seashore, and, amidst the lamentations of an entire people, their remains were consumed. Every family had lost a member, and some had altogether disappeared. In the place of sublime monuments, the work of our ancestors, heaps of ruins, blackened by the flames, were seen on all sides.

"But the hearts of the Atlantes were too noble

to give way to discouragement. Each one, man, woman, and child, worked to the full measure of his strength, and, within a comparatively short time, the cities of Atlantide recovered their ancient splendour. The inhabitants took fresh courage, their grief was assuaged, and oblivion, that plant which my father tells me flourishes naturally in the human heart, took root in theirs; and, in time, the awful cataclysm which had separated them from the rest of their kind, — to which some among them, considering the near neighbourhood of barbarous African tribes, were soon reconciled, — in time, I say, this event became nothing more than a memory.

"But the anger of the gods, for some inscrutable reason, was aroused against the Atlantes. Though they had escaped the fire from heaven and that of the volcano, as well as the earthquake and the floods, another and more alarming phenomenon appeared. They perceived that the soil was subsiding. Slowly, surely, with a constant but hardly perceptible movement, our island sank. One day, the cliff, formed by the destruction of the isthmus, looked down from a height of a hundred cubits. The next day its appearance was less bold, and in the space of a few moons it could hardly be seen above the water level. The verdant fields near to it were lost to view in the caresses of the traitorous sea, and their inundated soil gave way, transformed into a miniature lake,

under the feet of the unwary traveller. At first, they could not and would not believe it, but at length the truth was forced upon them.

"Our shores disappeared, little by little, beneath the waves. By insensible degrees the higher land of the interior followed. The most frightful death appeared inevitable. At first, as the truth dawned upon them, the unhappy Atlantes were filled with consternation. Public prayers were ordered to be made; sacrifices smoked on the altars. But the resistless enemy continued, nevertheless, to undermine, day by day, the foundation of their country. The seers then met in consultation. Our country had always been remarkable for the ingenious sagacity of her children. The most experienced of them worked for the space of two moons at their calculations; they took observations and averages, and they arrived at the conclusion that in ten or twelve years, at least, the soil of Atlantide would be entirely under water.

"Certainly the situation was appalling enough, and the stoutest hearts might well be dismayed at the prospect. Such was not the case, however. As soon as the result of their deliberations was made public, two parties were formed in the country. One determined to leave, to emigrate *en masse*, to seek a new country whither they could transport their civilization. Their decision, culminating in this

memorable exodus, was the pivot on which our history rests. It was these colonists who rowed their galleys towards the sea to which the Pillars of Hercules are the entrance. We have preserved among us a tradition that they were the founders of Phœnicia.

"Others, more attached to their cherished Atlantide, — and they were, moreover, the students, the artists, and the nobles of the country, — resolved to maintain themselves where they were, come what might, still struggling against the encroachment of the water.

"Dikes were constructed, earthworks were thrown up, cyclopean barriers erected to shut out the ocean. Often, in my childish hours, I have contemplated, from a distance, these monster blocks of stone through the walls of the crystal prison in which I was born. I will show them to thee, stranger. Covered as they are to-day with sea-weed, which has woven for them a waving mantle, they are a proof, in their enormous size, of the gigantic labour of my ancestors. The encroachment of the sea was retarded, to some extent, by the formidable wall, but it did not arrest it. Instead of ten years, twenty or thirty years, perhaps, were gained. The disappearance of the doomed land was only a question of time.

"Among the most illustrious of the learned men of the country shone a sage, the pure and noble Archytas. Permit me to sing his praises, stranger; he was an ancestor of ours. Charicles and I feel in

our veins the generous blood which beat through his noble heart.

"Admired by everybody, he displayed from early youth a surprising taste for scientific pursuits. What thou hast told us about Archimedes made me think of what I have been taught about Archytas. The most difficult problems were mere play to him. Always deep in the study of cosmic forces, he went through life as if in a dream, and the most ordinary incident was to him a pretext for sublime discoveries or lofty thought. He was never spoken of but in terms of the greatest respect, and, in the Atlantic Republic, he was justly accorded the highest rank. He did not use for himself the fortune with which fate had abundantly endowed him, except by consecrating colossal sums to the pursuit of his beloved science. Simply clothed in white linen, and using the floor for his couch at night, he lived on ears of wheat, milk, and fruit. Like the divine Pythagoras, of whom thou spakest this evening, he had a horror of shedding the blood of innocent creatures for his own subsistence. We, his descendants, follow this example. This sage cherished an ardent love for his country. His genius was roused and his pride revolted at the idea of leaving it forever. Should man allow himself to be conquered by the blind forces of Nature? Never! He would struggle to the last, and come out conqueror from this strange

duel! And before the astonished people Archytas unfolded a plan of unheard-of boldness. Strong in all the resources of the most refined science, armed with his great wealth, he had conceived the idea of an Atlantide which might continue to exist under the waves and defy their fury. This plan he realized by constructing, at his own expense, a bell-shaped town, a colossal crystal palace provided with everything necessary for social life, and where cultivation, industry, heat, and light should all be artificial, all the product of human effort.

"This palace, this submarine town, thou hast seen with thine own eyes, stranger. Thou breathest with ease the oxygen produced by the science of my great ancestor. Thou wouldst never have supposed that this wonder was due to the genius of a mere mortal? It is so, however; Archytas, my glorious ancestor, conceived and executed it quite alone. He regulated the minutest details of it even as he designed the entire plan, and the astonished people had nothing to do but to obey his directions. Everybody set himself to work. But that does not imply that the entire population accepted the fate of being ingulfed by the waves. No sooner was the project divulged, than an edict went forth ordering all the citizens of Atlantide to devote themselves to carrying out the plan of Archytas. No one refused, and the work made rapid strides. But every day some family

declared that they would leave the country before it finally foundered.

"As soon as the most important part of the work was finished there was a second exodus. Admire, stranger, the generosity of those who failed in the courage necessary for plunging into the abyss. They did not leave till their help was no longer needed, but their nobleness of soul did not save them. A storm, which broke over them during their voyage, swallowed them up in the very waves they endeavoured to fly from. That, no doubt, explains the fact of the wonderful enterprise of Archytas always remaining a mystery to the inhabitants of the globe, as thou callest our planet, though I have always been taught to consider it a disc, and not a sphere. But, no doubt, I am very ignorant of many things, and I will apply myself with docility to thy lessons, young stranger, if thou wilt take pity on a child whose life has been spent in exceptional surroundings, and to whom the world outside is a mystery.

"Hardly more than twenty families were left with Archytas. The crystal arch had been built up on the highest point of the town, the citadel. From that point they had seen their territory decrease day by day. The sea slowly and insidiously gnawed at the coast. The cliffs had entirely disappeared, and they were followed by the houses and the temples, and the only thing to be seen at last was a sort of peak,

crowned by the crystal bell. It subsided in its turn, and the oceanic winding-sheet enveloped all that remained of Atlantide. The glass cupola buried itself under the waste of waters, and the inmates saw the sea mounting slowly, slowly, through the transparent walls, until they could see nothing around them but the blue waves. Above them the azure dome of the heavens was visible for a little longer. Pale Phœbus darted his last rays through it, and finally, one evening, the fatal waters met overhead. All was over; Atlantide had disappeared forever from the land of the living!

"Archytas sustained every one by his courage and his example. Electricity, whose secret he had discovered, and which, as thou seest, still illumines us, came to replace, with its clear, pure brilliance, the rays of the god of day. The illuminated town still continued to fall gently to the bottom, where it has remained through the centuries, fixed like a colossal pearl in the cavity of an oyster shell. There she has defied the ravages of time, ignored by all the world, an unknown marvel, worthy of the admiration of the universe.

"The Atlantes became gradually habituated to their new mode of life. Archytas with the greatest ingenuity contrived to supplant by artificial cultivation the fruits of the earth to which they had been accustomed. They are sadly shorn of their glory,

these fertile fields, the outcome of human science, cultivated as they are now by an old man and a mere child, whose wants are few, and whose strength is small. But thou hast admired, and so hast thy brave servant, the beauty of our conservatories, and our strange cereals, which have hitherto been sufficient to nourish numerous families. Archytas transformed and adapted all the industries; it was mere play to him to invent or improve something fresh every day. Thou hast admired the texture of our vestments. Would not one think that it was woven from the finest wool from the frisking lambs of which I have heard? It is a tissue of linen transformed by submarine cultivation to the softness and lustre of silk. Archytas held that the elements of all things being in the soil and the atmospheric air, it only needed a chemist to extract from them, if he chose, all the necessaries of life. The miracle was to fabricate artificial air to apply to the treatment of the soil in abnormal conditions. That was the miracle which Archytas accomplished at the outset, and of which our very existence is the proof. I am, as thou seest, the last of my race, and I can truly say that I have hardly ever regretted the loss of outside things. Thy arrival hither, stranger, has set me dreaming of the world outside; and has awakened in me the thought that I am an exceptional being, a prisoner of the sea, in this crystal cage."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SONG OF THE SIREN.

ATLANTIS ceased speaking. With eyes fixed vaguely on the moving perspective of the waves, outside the transparent walls of the garden, she seemed overpowered by the vision she had called up; by the grandeur and the melancholy of these past years, — too heavy a burden for her young shoulders, and which, poor solitary waif, she had come to recognize as her inheritance.

Deeply moved, René, to some extent, read in her expressive face what was passing in her mind. How touching she looked in her tearless sadness, in her half conscious surrender to a fate, the bitterness of which she could hardly measure! So noble, so beautiful, so absolutely free from anything coarse or vulgar; what homage she would have received, what care, what devotion, what affection would have been accorded her, if it had not pleased the capricious gods, after having endowed her with beauty enough to blind the eyes of the living, to hide this rare pearl in the depths of the ocean! What a strange existence hers had been! She never had looked upon a

youth till she saw René. All the words she had listened to had been grave and solemn. She had known nothing of girlish chatter, of that sweet babbling of infancy. More than that, she was entirely ignorant of the most innocent fun; she had discoursed on learned subjects, and she, herself, used, in speaking, ample periods and flowery metaphors, which would have seemed out of place on such young lips, if they had not been touched with simplicity and grace.

"How much this young life needs joy and sunshine," thought he. "What would I not give for her to know my mother, so good and kind; Hélène, so lively and amiable. Patrice will come to my help, I feel sure. When has he ever failed me, good-hearted fellow that he is? But he is only a man, and I could wish to see her among womankind, to fill up the blank, the most heartrending of all, in this existence so cruelly cut off from affection, from the love of a mother, a sister, a friend, or even a servant, from feminine affection of any kind."

He longed to tell her of the sympathy he felt for her, and to speak words of encouragement and hope; to tell her that, while so near to losing all she held dear, she had a friend ready to bring brightness into the sombre setting of her life. But the reverence he felt for her, and the fear of displeasing the venerable Charicles, and, perhaps, the

fear also of being misunderstood by Atlantis herself, kept him silent. For, with all her lofty Greek culture, the young girl was ignorant of many things, a complete stranger, one would think, to any sentiment of the modern mind! Before startling her by premature professions of love, would it not be better to try to bring about a better understanding of each other; to reveal to her something of her moral personality — her responsibility; to tell her something of the world above the sea-level, from which a strict law had severed her? Should he not, above all, endeavour to dissipate the dark cloud of loneliness and isolation which weighed on her like a yoke of lead; to teach her something of the liveliness and gaiety belonging to her age; to teach her to laugh; and, from the majestic isolation that enveloped her, to bring out the sweet and simple girl that she really was? There would be time then to accustom her to the thought of the future, to teach her that, though she had known nothing of family life, of the cradle or the fireside, or of the friendly circle, the most brilliant and happy future was hers if she cared to have it.

Thus, guided by the most prudent and delicate of motives, the young man refrained from expressing what he felt so strongly. By adroit questions, he sought merely to induce her to throw off the oppression that weighed her down. From the broad lines

and overwhelming facts of the history of her race, he drew her on to tell him familiar and amusing details. He made her tell him about the life in the submerged city; how they first substituted art for nature for their daily needs; to what expedients necessity, the mother of invention, had brought the exiles, improving, by delicacy and finish, the most trifling objects they used; how tradition had been piously and devotedly clung to; how new generations had grown up; and how, when the last of the original inhabitants died, there remained not a single person who had seen the sun and breathed the upper air; how, a few months after her birth, a mysterious epidemic had carried off her mother, and swept away, at one stroke, relations and friends, and how the race, so strong and vigorous, became reduced to the two present representatives, Charicles and Atlantis. But, while encouraging her to tell him all this, René took care to keep the dark side of it in the background, dwelling upon the picturesque and humourous aspect; and the young girl, who till now knew nothing of laughter, save the boisterous mirth of Homer's rough soldiers, was actually betrayed into a peal of merriment as astonishing as delightful, coming from one who hardly knew even how to smile. He seized every opportunity of teaching her, not only a few words of French, but the elementary notions of our world,

its institutions, customs and fashions, its greatness and its folly; and he had the joy of seeing the gravity of her face relax little by little; and, as his language took a simple and familiar turn, a look of girlish amusement stole over her sweet face, and made her blue eyes sparkle with keen intelligence.

"It is not for nothing, that she is a distant cousin of Aristophanes!" said René to himself, delighted with the vivacity of the young Greek girl. "It would have been more wonderful still if, coming as she does from such a source, the consoling gift, common to his race, of seizing the amusing side of things, had been lacking in her. Dear Atlantis! what capacity, what talent lies dormant in her! How I long to give this noble creature the space she needs for developing herself freely and harmoniously. Ah! I can only repeat, what miracles my mother and Hélène could effect here! With her marvellous intuition, her Athenian suppleness, she would grasp things almost before they had time to explain them! I sometimes think that it would be a pity and almost impious to drape this antique muse in a costume bought in the Rue de la Paix, to exchange her sandals for boots, and the fillet which binds her hair for a hat trimmed with ribbon. Pure prejudice, however! I feel sure, if I understand her, that in a week's time, in a few hours'

stay in Paris, she would understand and adopt the modern costume. It is only rusticity that is the innate foe of fashion, and who understood the worship of novelty better than the Greeks? And is there, after all, an absolute standard of beauty in dress? Does it not all depend upon the grace of the wearer? And who could hope to compete with her in that? And it would be the same in everything; she would assimilate everything that is good and beautiful; she would become the most accomplished of French women."

The long hours passed, so interesting, so full of new impressions, of reciprocal revelations, of excursions into unknown lands, where each in turn took the part of a guide, that it seemed impossible to them afterwards, in recalling those days, to believe that they were only measured by the ordinary length. And they were right, for hours, like centuries, have only a conventional limit, and these days were an epoch in their life.

Meanwhile, as Atlantis told her story, Charicles gradually relapsed into silence and immobility. Attentive at first, by and by his eyes closed, and his slow, deep breathing made it evident to them that his uneasy sleep had returned. Atlantis, poor child, did not understand the gravity of it; but this torpor seemed of bad augury to René's more experienced eyes. Convinced that it was necessary to rouse the

invalid, he made him swallow some more drops of his elixir, and tried by friction to restore heat to the cold limbs. But all efforts were in vain. If the old man gave any sign of life, it was but a feeble movement, and only manifested a painful desire to be left to die in peace. Now and then they fancied they discerned some trace of consciousness on the marble face, once even a slight contraction of the brows, like a hardly perceptible ripple stirred by the breeze on a smooth lake. Was he listening to them? Did he hear? Did he understand? René and Atlantis had never talked so freely as now. They had before told each other their history. Now they opened their hearts to each other. Did the old man perceive, in the animated words of the young man, in the ardent interest of the young girl, the inspiration of a life from which he had voluntarily shut himself out? Was his old heart wrung, on the threshold of the darkness on which he was about to enter, with a bitter regret for all that he might have known, for all that he was about to quit? The two young people bent over him, watching for some fresh sign of awakening consciousness; spoke to him affectionately; begged him to tell them by a sign if he wished for anything. But no, he lay absolutely still. They were deceived, no doubt, and they seated themselves by his couch. Hope had brought a brighter colour to Atlantis's face than the delicate

tint habitual to it. She looked at that moment so exquisitely beautiful that René could not take his eyes off her face, and the frank and unaffected look of inquiry of the reason of this persistent attention drew from him the remark:

"I wonder how so lovely a flower can bloom without the sun's rays ever having touched it. Excuse me," he added, precipitately, when he saw deepen the blush that he had so praised. "Such observations are unpardonable, but I assure you it slipped from me without premeditation."

The young girl knew nothing of the art of receiving or resenting a compliment. She blushed from innate modesty, but it never would have entered her head to be offended at what he said. "Why, if you think me beautiful, should you not tell me so?" replied she, simply. "Beauty is a gift of the gods, my father has taught me, and I thank them for having made me beautiful, in his eyes and in yours. Besides, do not think that I have never seen the light of fair Phœbus."

"What do you say?" cried René. "Did the science of the sublime old man extend as far as that? Could science find means to pierce the dense, dark mass of the waters and reach the light of day? In truth that does puzzle me!"

"No," said Atlantis, "it was not by any help of optical instruments that I saw the glorious fire which

gives life to the world. Certainly the science which my father made use of, the legacy he received from ancient Egypt, added to his own profound thoughtfulness, seemed to me to far outstrip what you have told me of modern conquests in the domain of physical science; but it was with my own eyes that I saw the sun!"

"Is it possible? You have been in our world! You will perhaps be allowed to come back to it! I must be dreaming, surely. Do please tell me about it. You cannot think how happy that revelation has made me."

"In your world?" repeated Atlantis, with an unconscious expression of melancholy. "No, I have never landed there. I have never left the kingdom of Thetis; my father would not have suffered it. I should never have dared to ask him to infringe, for my sake, the severe law under which we lived, by allowing me to rise to the surface of the water. My father is infallible, like the gods. He knows what is just and right, and it is not for a weak girl to question his decrees. But, when curiosity is roused by restlessness and by eyes opening and longing to see more, and has found its way into the heart, and brings sleeplessness to one's pillow, how can one stifle it? Phœbus had just accomplished for the fifteenth time his revolution round the world, after I was born, when my father, judging me to be

worthy to listen to his confidences, revealed to me the complete history of our people. Till that time, I was ignorant of the fact that the Atlantes had ever lived in the upper world. What do I say? I did not know, even, that there was a world outside my home. Ah! would that he had kept the secret! From that day, my mind learnt what unrest, agitation, discontent was. I knew then that I was a prisoner. In vain Charicles boasted of the greatness of my ancestors, taught me to appreciate the advantage of being born of an opulent and noble race, and showed me how the great majority of my fellow men were bound under the yoke of powerful tyrants, debased and depressed by excessive toil, and not always succeeding in earning by their daily labour the bread necessary for their children's miserable existence. Strange, indeed, it was, that this comparison only made me envy the fate of these defrauded people. My father called them slaves; ah! was I not much more a slave? Had they not the fresh air to breathe, the vault of heaven for a habitation, the sun for light and heat? These poor women that my father described, begging alms, trailing their rags on the roadside, often burdened by an infant their arms were barely strong enough to carry, — oh, how gladly would I have given up to them my rich clothing, the abundance and delicacies of our table, the glories of my past, the security of

the present! I would gladly have had a taste of their misery, for the sake of breathing the fresh air, of feasting my eyes with the sight of my fellow creatures, of hearing their voices, and something of the noisy tumult of life. All these thoughts I kept to myself, but Charicles's eyes were piercing, and he saw my face grow paler day by day, under the pressure of this indescribable longing.

"One day my father said to me: 'Atlantis, the look of care I see in thy pale brow, thy hollow cheek, thy haggard eye, has entered into my heart.'

"'Father,' replied I, 'forgive a weak girl. I cannot help it. Yes, I confess that black care has taken possession of my soul. This cruel imprisonment weighs me down.'

"'And thou hast not confided thy trouble to thy father?'

"'Respect, and the fear of displeasing thee, have kept my mouth closed.'

"'Speak! I authorize thee to do so.'

"Then I told him, not so freely, perhaps, as I am telling you now, for I feared that he might imply that I reproached him, how much I longed for change, the great desire I felt to see the land of the living, my true country; to escape, if only for a short time, from this tomb which was crushing my heart. Charicles did not say much in response to my confession; when he spoke, they were oracles

which fell from his lips, and, if he had had a word of blame for my aspirations, there would have been no appeal against it. But he was doubtless touched by my distress, though neither a word nor a look betrayed it to me then. For I soon found that he was making preparations for a voyage. My father is a good workman as well as a clever mechanician. With his own hands, he constructed a shallop hermetically closed, attached to a floating air-balloon fitted with hydrogen gas, by which we could rise to the surface of the water. It was a marvel of lightness and elegance."

"Ah!" cried René, "how much I should like to see it!"

"I should think you would, indeed," said Atlantis, smiling; "there is no need for me to boast to you about a prodigy such as you have accomplished yourself in an inverse sense, that is the only difference. But alas, thou wilt never see it, this vessel which was so dear to me, for Charicles destroyed it with his own hands!"

"Heavens! did the noble artist become a prey to temporary madness?"

"No," replied Atlantis, shaking her head, "the dark furies never clouded the clear understanding of Charicles; it was by a deliberate act that he reduced to nothing the work of his genius. This is what happened: Everything was in readiness for the

ascent I had been longing for. Trembling with impatience, I waited for my father to give the word for me to set foot on the boat, when he took my hand and said to me, with great solemnity:

"'Atlantis, the object which thou hast so much desired is about to be accomplished. Before thou seest the region which attracts thy curiosity, it is my duty, it is due to our traditions, to warn you of three things: our excursion must be bounded by the liquid element; neither Charicles nor Atlantis must ever land upon the shores of continents inhabited by barbarians. In the second place, we must avoid attracting attention from any vessels we might meet, and lastly, and this point I insist upon, these excursions must be of rare occurrence and very short, and, if I find that thy heart is too much set upon them, and that thou sighest after a different mode of life from that of thy fathers, I shall not hesitate to break in pieces the instrument which will have helped thee to be unfaithful to thy own home!'

"I promised all my father wished. I thought that I could bend to his will, and I was, moreover, so happy at the thought of going that I hardly paid attention to what he said.

"The boat leapt from the point from which he detached it with prodigious speed, and, in a few moments, we were at the surface. What a spectacle! Phœbus, having almost finished his course, was about

to plunge with his flaming car below the wide expanse. Already a star had appeared. A little later the sun disappeared; other stars shone out; a balmy, divine breeze fanned our faces. Ye gods, what wonders! How could any one enjoy such pleasures day by day and call himself unhappy? My father pointed out the constellations to me, and showed me how to set a quadrant. I listened to him as in a dream; he seemed to me to be numbered among the gods. But soon a sharp pain smote me to the heart, when he said: 'Prepare to descend again.' I was on the point of letting entreaty, a word of remonstrance, escape me, but I stopped in time. For the first time in my life I dissimulated. With a force that I cannot explain to myself, I controlled my face, called up a laughing expression, and accepted with apparent indifference the signal to return. I felt that I must at any cost see these splendid heavens again, feel the rocking of the waves, drink another deep draught of the blessed air. I learnt how to wait without betraying my haste till my father decreed another excursion into the upper world, but I was devoured with impatience. At last, the moment so long waited for arrived; my father, much pleased with me, gave me the reward of my obedience. And so we repeated the pleasure several times, and I lived only for them.

"One night, not very long ago, we were floating, impelled by a light breeze, when a vessel of elegant

proportions appeared in sight. By degrees it came nearer; I felt sure I saw a human form on the deck! Ah! young stranger, thou canst form no conception of the emotions that passed through my mind! My father was absorbed, or sleeping, I do not know which. He did not appear to pay any attention to what was passing around him. Suddenly the god of harmony took possession of me, involuntarily, and almost without knowing what I did, I gave utterance to the feeling that oppressed me, and a song escaped my lips. My father had carefully trained me in the art of music, but this song I had never learnt. It had a sad, irresistible, spontaneous expression, the aspiration of my soul. I ceased, consoled at having given a shape to my anguish; but imagine how my heart fluttered at the sound, at a little distance, of a musical voice raised in its turn across the water. It seemed as if the sea had brought a response to my call. I could not understand the words, but I remember the melody. I shall never forget it as long as I live."

"Atlantis! Atlantis!" cried René, who for some moments had scarcely succeeded in controlling his agitation, "I am certain I know that melody, let me repeat the words to you." And, in a voice in which deep feeling could not conceal the purity and fulness, he repeated the first few words of Marcello's hymn: "The heavens are telling." Atlantis, with dilated eyes, seemed petrified with astonishment; but soon,

two tears, the first he had seen in her eyes, betrayed her tender joy.

"It was thou! it was thou!" she articulated, in a stifled voice.

"Yes, it was I, and it was thou!" repeated René, not less moved, not less happy. "Ah, dear Atlantis, here is a link worth ten years of friendship. It was while I was sounding from the yacht *Cinderella*. It was midnight; I was alone on deck when I heard a divine voice piercing the pure air. How many times I have ineffectually tried to transcribe those incomparable stanzas!"

"I could not repeat them again myself," said Atlantis. "All that I know is that they came straight from my heart, and also that they shut me out forever from the upper world, for, at the sound of my voice, Charicles suddenly awoke from his reverie. 'Miserable girl!' cried he, 'what hast thou done? Like the deceitful sirens, doth thou use a gift from heaven to enchant thy own father, to lull his watchfulness over thee to sleep? Hast thou forgotten thy vows? Say farewell to the starry vault, to the waving waters, to the seductive air. Thou shalt never see them again.' The sides of the boat closed over us and we sank under water. A fragment of thy song still rang in my ravished ear. The next day Charicles destroyed his *chef-d'œuvre*. No words can paint my grief to thee. I lost all hope."

CHAPTER XVII.

CHARICLES IMBIBES SOME MODERN IDEAS.

DEEPLY moved by what they had just discovered, and occupied with again and again going over the recollection of that strange meeting, and corroborating the details of it by their simultaneous proofs, marvelling at the prodigy, saying to each other over and over again that it was a unique occurrence, and an evident indication of destiny, the two young people were unaware that Charicles, for a long time, had lain with his eyes open.

"Attention!" the old man suddenly articulated.

Overjoyed, they flew to his side. What new miracle was about to be accomplished? The invalid's voice was quite clear, his eye bright, and his features had lost their rigidity; but what struck them still more than these welcome signs of a return to life, was the new expression on his face. Neither of them could have explained how it was, but he seemed to them to have become a new man, previously unknown to them. In this spirit, devoted unswervingly to appearances, to the exclusive wor-

ship of the past, the present came as a revelation, and pity had penetrated his inexorable heart.

"My children," said he, "I want to speak to you. While you have been talking, I have heard you, I have been listening, I have understood. More than once I have tried to raise my voice to speak to you, but I could not; my tongue was tied. It was fated that I should wait and hear you to the end, that the scales might gradually fall from my eyes, that my obstinate heart might learn the lesson taught by this young stranger, of humanity and pity. Atlantis, it is not seeming that an old man should humble himself before the young, much less a father before his child. But I wish, before going to join the shades of my ancestors, to confess that I have been hard towards thee. I believed I was acting rightly; I was prompted by tradition."

"Father, revered father," said the trembling girl, throwing herself on her knees beside the bed, and pressing his wasted hand to her lips, "do not speak thus. Forgive my audacity. Thou alone knowest what thou oughtest to say. But I cannot bear to hear thee reproach thyself on my account,—thou so noble and so great! No, I cannot. Thy words are like a sword piercing my heart. I was wrong to complain, seeing that all my destiny has been ruled by wisdom itself. Forget, father, the imprudent words, which a hostile power doubtless dictated. I

call the gods to witness, the gods that have always protected our family, that my respect for thee and my gratitude to thee will never fail."

Sobs choked her voice, and prevented her from continuing.

"Calm thyself, my daughter," said Charicles, stroking her fair head fondly. "Thy readiness to accuse thyself is a proof of thy generous heart. If thou hast wronged me it is but a light matter, and I forgive thee; but I must speak, and thou must listen to what I have to say. I have heard it said," continued he, dreamily, "that wisdom sometimes issues from the mouths of children. It is true. I, an old man, versed in science, ripened by meditation, enlightened by history, and strong in experience, have learnt something from thy young lips; thou hast brought me a message. I have learnt that wisdom has clothed herself in a new form, and I acknowledge a power more beautiful than all I ever valued before; that virtue, that sentiment that thou describeth, young man, by the sublime words of brotherly love and pity between man and man. I believed that my science, being of more ancient origin, if not greater than all that thou hast attained to by groping in the dark, justified me in keeping up a haughty reserve, refusing to have anything to do with barbarians, as our Greek fathers called all those who were not of their race, in affirming to the end our essential

superiority. It is right that I should stoop to own that the world has progressed without us. I believed that, having reached the highest point of perfection, we ought to remain stationary for fear of deteriorating; but thou hast shown me to what error my pride led me. Not that thou hast ever made use of arrogant or exaggerated words to boast of the great things accomplished by thy race. Modesty reigns on thy lips, and I am pleased by the importance thou givest to the sentiment to which thou givest a new name, that of *patriotism*. Far from seeking to dazzle me with a picture of civilization acquired without effort, thou hast described to me the painstaking work of centuries, the slow conquests of heredity, and the laborious progress of moral ideas. I understand now what we have missed. I see, at my life's close, that during the whole of it I have hugged a phantom in my arms, a withered skeleton. Of what use is a science which will not be beneficial to others? What good is there in riches, beauty, power if not shared with humanity? But the error that could only affect me was nothing to the much graver wrong of condemning my daughter to a destiny which could only be heavy and cruel!

"Yes," he resumed, "I have been harsh and severe; but who can tell how to distinguish between the wilful and the unconscious pursuit of error. I blindly followed the traditions of the Atlantes; but my

eyes have been opened at last. Thou hast brought to me the spirit of thy age, stranger; and it is a benevolent spirit. The inexpressible charm which emanates from thy ardent and generous life has conquered me. Since the day that thou madest thy appearance here, an insensible change has come over me unknown to myself; but it is while listening to you two that the ice in my heart has broken. Thou hast tried, traveller, to make me seize these characteristics of thy modern world: sympathy, altruism, courteous amenities, freedom, without familiarity, and above all, chivalry, and the just and generous place accorded to woman in the family. And thy example has been stronger than all thy words. I listened to my Atlantis, and it seemed as if I heard a new creature speaking. I who gave her life, the only person who has trained her, — I never spoke to her as thou hast done! What graces, what flowers I have bruised or unknowingly neglected in this tender plant. Awkward, clumsy gardener, I still tried, after having despotically compelled her to share with me during her early years my voluntary exile, to condemn her to spend the rest of her life in this close conservatory, where she feels suffocated and longs for frèsher air. My excuse is, I repeat, that I was blind.

"Now that I see, Atlantis, I give thee thy liberty. Those of thy race that have erred through inflexibility or obstinacy have not failed in magnanimity.

Thou knowest, my daughter, that if I have been tardy in understanding thee, I am at least prompt in giving thee satisfaction; and, if ever thy old father has seemed to thee hard and cruel, know that underneath the pride, that tradition and habit had fostered in his heart, the most pure affection for thee never ceased to burn. Go then, Atlantis; leave the home of thy fathers under the guidance of this generous stranger."

Obedient to her father's command, Atlantis had made a strong effort to control the poignant feelings his words cost her, so that she might not interrupt by word or sign a speech which cut her to the heart. But now she could contain herself no longer.

"Father, father!" cried she, her words cut short by sobs, "dost thou want to break my heart? I, leave thee? Ah! if ever I ventured to wish to become familiar with the fresh air of the country or the noise of populous cities, it is by thy side that I would like to be; without thee, I should not have cared for these joys. Tell me what thou knowest about them, father; but whatever thou sayest or doest, do not tell me to leave thee!"

"Thou hast but half understood me, my child," said the old man, with a gentle smile; "it is not thou who wilt leave me, it is I whose hours are numbered."

Poor Atlantis sobbed afresh.

"Let us learn to accept the inevitable, my daughter," continued he, a shade of sternness in his tone, "and not trouble ourselves with vain lamentations in so solemn an hour, the last hour, in which it is given to me to cast a retrospective glance for the last time before collecting myself and resuming —"

"But it is not the last," interrupted René, impetuously. "In a few hours, perhaps less, noble Charicles, I hope to welcome the arrival of the friend of whom I told you, — a man profoundly versed in the art of healing, and who will restore you to health. Ah! let us hope so! let us hope that our care and our love will restore to you the desire and the power to live. I never knew my father, Charicles; grant me the happiness of finding one in you; permit me to share Atlantis's hopes and fears, and spare us the melancholy forebodings of death which afflict us both."

"It is useless to try to deceive me," said the old man, affectionately but decidedly. "Death is beckoning me and I must follow him. All the skill of thy friend could only delay the end for a few short days. While there is time, and the gods grant me clearness of mind, it will be much better to take the measures necessary for repairing the past, and arranging for the future, than losing precious moments in abandoning ourselves to false hopes."

Charicles paused, exhausted with speaking so long.

Atlantis had taken his hand, over which her silent tears flowed. René, standing by the bed, waited respectfully till the old man gained strength enough to express his thoughts. He felt sure that he had something decisive to say. Had not he said a little while before to his daughter: "Go, follow this generous stranger." And how could she follow him except as his affianced bride? Evidently he was about to confide her to him, his only child, the last flower of this haughty stock, already so interesting by her strange destiny, rendered more touching still by the imminent loss of her sole relative. Ah! how he longed to comfort the dying man with assurances that his wishes should be piously carried out; that the precious legacy would fall into safe hands; that the orphan would find a family circle, the stranger a home.

Truth to say, events had developed more rapidly than even he could have wished. When René penetrated into the submarine fortress, attracted by a love that had mastered him, his motive was unquestionably to ingratiate himself with Charicles and his daughter, to make himself acceptable to them, in fact, to arrive step by step at the result he had now reached. He had calculated all the possibilities, all the difficulties of the enterprise, and the event proved he had calculated rightly. The only thing he had not foreseen was the rapidity with which it

all came about. Not that he was not in haste, as far as he himself was concerned, to call Atlantis his betrothed wife; that can be understood; but he was not the only person to take into consideration. René had a mother, a mother justly loved and venerated; he knew what plans Madame Caoudal had formed for a long time with regard to his future; he did not shut his eyes to the possibility of her instinctively protesting against a daughter-in-law of such extraordinary origin, even if she had not had at heart his marriage with Hélène. Certainly he reckoned upon overcoming this pardonable opposition; but it would be necessary for him to treat her prejudices with all possible consideration; to prepare her by degrees to become acquainted with both father and daughter, to introduce them to her at the right moment; and, Madame Caoudal and Hélène once conquered (as would infallibly be the case), to risk his petition. The turn things had taken, however, seemed hardly favourable to this arrangement; to await the last hours of Charicles, to close his eyes, and, once the last sad duties to him fulfilled, to regain *terra firma* with Atlantis, to present the interesting stranger to Madame Caoudal, seemed to him the course to pursue; for where could he take her but to the care of his mother? Ah! he knew her well! She would be kind, helpful, hospitable to the orphan, but accept her as a daughter! No;

such a mode of introduction as that would be fatal to future harmony. Ah! if Madame Caoudal could but see her in her own home, converse with the noble Charicles, arrange with him the future of their children, — follow the good old French custom which leaves the parents a free hand in such matters, — he felt the greatest difficulty would be surmounted. But what was the use of conjuring up the impossible? The only thing to be done, now, was to take things as they were; and to endeavour to arm himself with courage and patience and tact in view of probable obstacles.

"What would I not have given, two months ago," thought he, "for a tithe of the satisfaction I feel now? What price would I not have paid for the situation of things as they now are, with all the ordeals and struggles I have gone through in the attainment of it? No difficulty would have stopped me. Alas! that which makes me anxious now, is not the necessity of toiling and struggling! But how arm oneself against a loving mother, when one is about to disappoint her hopes, and how endure with an intrepid face the contempt which would at first strike my sweet Atlantis?"

As these anxious thoughts revolved in René's mind, cares which clouded his present joy without, however, in the least altering or modifying his resolution, Charicles had recovered sufficient

strength to renew the interrupted thread of his discourse, to give René his final instructions, and to confer on him the supreme proof of his confidence, — the honour of espousing his daughter, the pearl of the ocean. His features were lighted up with a generous nobility of expression, — he believed, and not unreasonably, that he was offering him a priceless gift. The poor old man would have been much surprised if he had known how preoccupied and agitated was the mind of his adopted son. He, Charicles, the representative of so noble a race, how could he or his be received by no matter what family with coldness or displeasure? Alliance with them, at the most, accepted and not at all solicited! Atlantis merely tolerated and not sought! How could he suspect such a state of things? If René had lifted a corner of the veil, he could not have explained to him the prejudice, the littleness, the want of confidence hidden in the heart of the best of his kind. It was a subject he could not broach.

"Young man," said Charicles, in a solemn voice, "come near me." He seized his hand and joined it to that of Atlantis. "I give her to thee," said he, with dignity; "she is worthy of thee. I have studied thee well. Thou art generous and strong; intelligence lights up thy face; courage shines in thine eyes, and thy mouth knows not how to lie.

Thy heart has gone out to my daughter; guard it faithfully for her. Thou wilt soon be her only kindred, be a father to her as well as a husband; she will repay thee a hundredfold for anything thou dost for her."

"Charicles," said René, with a firm voice, "I receive, with love and gratitude, the glorious gift you have made me. Heaven grant that our care of you may prolong your days, but, when the hour comes that you must leave us, depart in peace! Your daughter shall be served and protected as she ought to be, — I can add nothing to that. You have said, better than I could have expressed it, that my heart is hers, my life belongs to her, and will be consecrated to making her happy. May I succeed in doing so."

Silent and thoughtful, the young girl listened without joining in the conversation of which she was the subject. Her unaffected looks expressed deep joy and absolute confidence. She had no more idea of possible difficulties in the way of her happiness than her father had; and if she had, the proud consciousness of her worth would have been sufficient to banish uneasiness on that score. But she was far from imagining anything of the kind. It was not for nothing that her life had been spent at the bottom of the sea. It would hardly have been worth while to have been brought up in such

a retreat, if she had brought to the threshold of married life the paltry cares and artificial preoccupation which too often come in its train. Marriage portion, relations, wedding presents and other accessories, which so often take up the principal place at weddings, had none may be sure, no place in her thoughts, any more than the question as to whether she was making a grand match and René a mediocre one. By and by, no doubt, she would know something of it all, and would learn to treat, with becoming seriousness, the trifles which take up so large a place in society. For the present she was ignorant of them, and René could enjoy with confidence the feeling that the interest he inspired in his *fiancée* was not influenced by any of these considerations. In the eyes of Atlantis there were only three living beings; her father, René and herself, and the outside world was nothing to her. It was enough for her that she was betrothed, and she was free to listen devoutly to the solemn words pronounced by her father.

"Dear daughter," resumed Charicles, in a voice still clear, but manifestly weaker, "he whom from this time forward I shall call my son has taught me that, in the country where he lives, though a father holds the right of disposing his daughter in marriage, his power is always tempered with gentleness; the young girl is allowed to give her opinion! That

custom surprises me much; but, in regard to thy future condition, I do not shrink from conforming to it. Say, Atlantis, what is thy mind on the subject of the husband I have chosen for thee?"

"My heart is full of joy," the young girl unhesitatingly replied; "and it blesses thee, father. I am ignorant of many things, but of one thing I am certain, and that is that I would have chosen him among any to whom thou couldst have united me. I say this frankly, René, for, unknown to yourself, you have more than once allowed a doubt about me to be perceptible. Confess," said she, with a malicious twinkle in her eyes, "that you are not altogether without fear that my choice may be the effect of chance; the love I give you might have been given to any one who instead of you had knocked at our door. Undeceive yourself. Like that Miranda, whose history you have told me, I have never seen any one else, it is true; but is not my father the most beautiful, the most perfect of men, and, if you have borne comparison with him, does not that prove that you ought to be superior to all others? Besides, René, henceforth it is no longer the question between us of the relative value of either of us. What does it matter to us if there are men and women in the world worth more than we. We are one, that is enough."

"My child," said Charicles, charmed, "wisdom

and grace speak by thy mouth. But is it true, my son, has this child penetrated thy secret thoughts?"

"It is perfectly true," said René, surprised and delighted; "such fears have crossed my mind. Thy daughter's perfections and my inferior merits must be my excuse. But, believe me, Atlantis, after what you have just said, all my fears are set at rest. I also bless thee, Charicles, for having given me such a bride. Never man before had one so good and pure."

"And I bless the gods for having reserved for me so happy an end," said the old man; "and I pray them to give you a long and happy life. But I must not, in the contemplation of your joy, allow my strength to wear away before putting in order material affairs. Listen to my last instructions!"

He collected himself for an instant, and then, in a voice that was only a gasp, said:

"I do not wish to have any tomb but the bed on which I lie, — on which my ancestors have given up the ghost, and where the glorious line of the inhabitants of Atlantide is now about to be closed. My son René, I beg thee to accept, in the name of thy wife, the jewels that thou wilt find in the ivory chest at the head of my bed. They constitute a dowry worthy of the daughter of the Atlantes, and thou wilt be able to carry them away without being overburdened. And, when I have ceased to live, you will go. I wish it."

Charicles's voice here became so feeble that they could hardly hear what he said. It was apparently a short swoon. Then, recovering, he resumed, with an effort:

"I must show you the way out."

But here, his words were altogether inaudible, his face became fixed, and he was once more completely powerless. Atlantis, leaning over him in anguish, laid her hand on his heart. René held a glass to his pale lips.

"He still breathes," said he, joyfully. "Look at this film. Hope! let us hope! I am expecting my friend's help. He must soon be here, now."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FIRST RING AT THE DOOR.

ATLANTIS and René, standing beside Charicles's couch, found that they were powerless to rouse him from the state of syncope into which he had relapsed. But, at least, they had the consolation of knowing that he still lived, and then they had so much to think about and to hope for, that they could not be altogether unhappy. Moreover, had not Charicles, with his dislike of extravagant expressions of joy or sorrow, so fatal to harmony and beauty, exhorted them to calmness and courage? Had he not expressed a desire that peace and serenity should reign round his dying bed? They watched, therefore, by turns, taking time occasionally for food and rest, sometimes resuming the conversation which was uniting them more and more closely, and sometimes relapsing into that unconstrained silence, only possible to those who are in perfect sympathy with each other.

By this time, a week had elapsed since Kermadec's departure to the upper regions. René had counted the hours till his return. He had no doubts

as to Kermadec and Patrice; his knowledge of the blind obedience on the part of the former, and the absolute devotion on the part of the latter, told him that they would be there at the first possible moment if nothing came in the way. And that possibility never entered into his calculations. He was before all things an optimist; he possessed the happy disposition which, believing all miracles possible, assumes the fulfilment of them. The tone of perfect confidence which pervaded his appeal to Stephen had acted powerfully in forming his resolution to comply with it, and no doubt it had a strong influence on Madame Caoudal and Hélène.

The hours slipped along; and, at length, they heard the bell ring! Atlantis remained by her father's side, and, with a rapid stride, René went towards the entrance to the air-lock. What was his joy when, through the thick, dark liquid mass of water, a momentary flash of electric light showed him his *Titania!* Black, dumpy, compact, it had none of the lines which go to form the grace and beauty of the ordinary boat. All its beauty was in its internal arrangements. But how welcome it was in spite of that. With a beating heart René turned the crank which opened the sluices. The gate half opened, and the water penetrated without a rush. Little by little the lower chamber was filled; the gate opened wide, the boat entered, and the outer

gate closed. He then set the pump to work to empty the lower chamber; he saw the surface of the water fall and fall with its heavy load, till not a drop was left, and the *Titania* gently touched the sandy bed at the bottom. With a hand trembling with impatience, René opened the door, and ran to the boat, scaled its side, rushed to the companion ladder, with hands outstretched, to grasp those of the doctor and Kermadec, — and fell into the arms of his mother.

What exclamations, what tears of joy, what handshakings, what questions — unanswered — what happiness all round. Madame Caoudal's eyes were full of tears, as again and again she embraced her son. In a torrent of incoherent words, she told him over and over again that she had thought never to see him again, that the cruel sea had bereft her of him! She scolded him for his temerity, praised him for his courage; heaped upon him all the pet names of his childhood, long forgotten, but suddenly recalled under the influence of powerful emotion.

"Aunt Alice," said Hélène, trying to get a word in edgewise, "when you have quite finished with René, we should like to say a word to him."

"Ah! you must thank her," said Madame Caoudal, disengaging herself from his arms; "it is her doing. I should never have come but for her."

She stopped short in the middle of what she was saying, her eyes dilated as if struck with a super-

human vision. Kermadec was standing with his face to the door, cap in hand, bowing low and smiling. The others turned round, and an exclamation of surprise and admiration involuntarily escaped them all. Atlantis had come to the door. Attracted by the sound of their lively greetings, she came towards them, but at the threshold of the entrance she paused in astonishment, as if nailed to the floor. What she saw was so new to her, so unexpected! It was not the chorus of voices, or the number of people, a sight in itself strange enough to the young recluse, which struck her dumb. In this group, which to her eyes seemed quite a crowd, it was not Patrice or Kermadec, or even René himself, who first attracted and riveted her attention; what fascinated her was Hélène, with her gray travelling costume, her gloves, her dark beauty, and the contour of a modern woman. But when she caught sight of Madame Caoudal, she was deeply moved. A mother! What beautiful poems had spoken of motherly love to the poor motherless girl! Charicles, in noble and elevating words, had often touched on the subject. He had not concealed from Atlantis that, in taking her mother from her so early, the gods had treated her very harshly. Actuated, however, by prudence and reserve, he had never dwelt long on the subject. Till now, she was ignorant of how much she had been bereft. Here

was a revelation to her. She understood now, what René had felt, how sad her solitude had been. She understood why her young head hung sometimes, vaguely troubled by childish thoughts, to which she could not give expression for fear of encountering Charicles's displeasure, so great was his dislike to any demonstration of tenderness. Ah! it was not to him that she naturally turned for encouragement at such times, but to her mother; whose pale face had been hidden from her sight years ago, buried in a grotto in the garden.

Bending eagerly forward, supporting herself with one hand on the lintel of the door, and stilling the beating of her heart with the other, she listened to the torrent of words with which Madame Caoudal poured forth her motherly joy; she felt ready to fall on her knees with reverential respect, not in the least aware that she was the object of general admiration. In the unstudied elegance of her attire, whose graceful folds Phidias would have loved to reproduce in marble, in her pure cameo-like beauty, she looked more than mortal. At the same time one could trace in her pure features a look of naïve envy; they betrayed her distress so ingenuously, her longing to share in the banquet of family happiness spread before her, that they all felt touched.

Hélène was the most prompt in divining her feelings, and acting upon her kindly impulse. With a

grace different, but not inferior to that of the Greek girl, she went towards her with a quick step and took her by the hand:

"Atlantis," said she, "I know you. René has told me so much about you. I have loved you for a long time."

Two tears, like dew on violets, moistened Atlantis's long eyelashes.

"And I," said she, "know and love you, Hélène." Then, in a voice in which respect and shy tenderness were mingled, "Is that his mother?" Her voice and looks plainly said: "Would that she, too, could love me!"

René could not, durst not, say a word. He waited, his heart oppressed between fear and hope, knowing the goodness of his mother's heart, but fully aware of her prejudices; overpowered with happiness at the sudden turn events had taken, but, nevertheless, fearful lest some hitch, some unexpected event, might spoil everything. He had not reckoned in vain on the generous impulse of his mother's heart. She, also, had cast a sympathetic look at the young Greek girl, and, under the striking beauty of her appearance, had seen the lonely heart of the child who needed support, who thirsted for affection. She held out her arms to her.

"My child," she said, "come and kiss me."

With a stifled cry the young girl ran to her, and,

sinking on her knees, she took her hand and kissed it; but Madame Caoudal, raising her, folded her tenderly in her arms, and they mingled tears, whose mysterious source they could not have explained. Hélène and Patrice exchanged a quick look of sympathy. They were fast becoming accomplices; something told them that one of the knots in their own destiny was soon to be cut.

But, after all this intense excitement, a sort of embarrassment came over them all. Doctor Patrice, by way of a relaxation of the tension, asked to be introduced to Mademoiselle Atlantis, and begged to be conducted without loss of time to his patient.

In vain Atlantis, desiring to fulfil the duties of hospitality, suggested that he should first take a little rest. He declared that he had come expressly to see her father, to treat him to the best of his ability, and not to take his own ease. And, as she was really as anxious as he in the matter, she led the way to Charicles's bedside, after having given orders to Kermadec to conduct the ladies to a room where they could rest, and to serve them with refreshments. Madame Caoudal signed to her son to follow the doctor, and with a look of acquiescence he obeyed her.

"You understand," explained Madame Caoudal, — to whom it occurred that she had lost no time in making herself at home, — "you understand, my

child, that, though it is not proper for us to intrude in the invalid's house before the doctor allows it, on the other hand, propriety demands that René —"

"Oh! Aunt Alice, propriety!" cried Hélène, with a light laugh. "It seems to me we have acted very cavalierly by coming to this house at all uninvited."

"Ah, yes! that is true enough," exclaimed Madame Caoudal, much concerned at the discovery. "Do you think that Mademoiselle Atlantis will think our coming an impertinent intrusion?"

"She?" said Hélène, quickly. "Is it possible that any paltry thought could find a place in that goddess-like head? Can't you see that she has only one wish with regard to us, and that is to offer everything her house contains with all her heart. She is altogether charming, auntie, and I love her!"

"Hélène, you go too fast," said Madame Caoudal, with an endeavour to appear stiff.

"Bah! you love her already yourself, Aunt Alice. We all do. How can one help it, Kermadec?" added she, addressing the youth as he placed before them a table covered with fruit, looking as if it had just been collected from a fairy's garden.

"Surely, Mademoiselle Hélène," replied Kermadec, suddenly drawing himself up in the regulation position of a seaman speaking to his superiors.

"Confess, Kermadec, that she has supplanted me in your affections."

"For that matter, no, mademoiselle. With your leave, no one can come before the mother and sister of my officer. But, apart from that, there is no denying that the young lady of the sea is decidedly pleasing."

"Hélène!" said Madame Caoudal, as soon as Kermadec had withdrawn, "how can you speak so familiarly to that sailor?"

"Oh, Aunt Alice! he is not a mere sailor, he is a friend. And then I am so happy. I am so glad we came. See how splendid, and how brilliant, and peaceful, too, everything is. It is the kingdom of beauty, it is Arcadia, an ideal country! There is nothing wicked or ugly; no social rank, no masters and servants. We are shipwrecked on an isolated rock; all Philistine shams have disappeared, and the sole superiority here is that of goodness."

"What do you say, my child?" said Madame Caoudal, startled, and uneasy.

"Oh! you know very well, dear auntie, but I will speak without reserve! More fortunate than Atlantis, I have a mother; a real mother. I have never had to lock up a secret within me or keep any weight on my spirits for want of some one to share them with. However insignificant my joys and griefs were, I could venture to tell them to you, and find an interested listener. It never occurred to me till now how much I owe to you. I understand now the

look in that motherless girl's face when she saw you. Poor child! With all her stately beauty she is worse off than the little gipsy children, who are cuffed and knocked about from morning till night, but at least cared for and kissed by their mothers. Does n't it seem to you that we, who have had loving attention heaped upon us all our lives, have a duty to discharge to her; to comfort, console, and love her, and to make up to her for the happiness she had a right to, but has been deprived of?"

"Can you doubt, my child?" said Madame Caoudal, in a softened tone, but inwardly embarrassed. "Do you fear for a moment that I should be unwilling to concur in your outburst of generous feeling. It is all very surprising, very strange, very precipitate; but, at least, you saw me embrace the young girl."

"Oh, yes, you were, as usual, spontaneously kind and considerate. But, can't I see as well as if you told me that your better-judgment reproaches you for showing so much cordiality? Come, listen to your own kind heart, which is really in the right. Do not let them have to entreat, to wring from you, your consent; place in René's hand the hand of his *fiancée*—"

"Hélène, my child, what are you saying?" cried Madame Caoudal, completely overcome. "Do you know that that would be to destroy my dearest hopes? And you, you, my chosen daughter—" And tears filled her eyes.

"Your daughter I am," said Hélène, taking her in her arms, "and I could not be more your daughter, if a hundred Renés were to marry me. But give up, dear auntie, a project which would bring no happiness to any one. Let us face things as they are: René does not want me, and — excuse my plainness — I do not want him! Besides, we have both of us wishes in other directions, — I mean René has made his choice, and it is irrevocable. Will you, for the sake of a chimerical idea, make him unhappy?"

"Make him unhappy? God forbid! All I wish for is to see him happy."

"Then give him the consent he so eagerly longs for, or, better still, before he asks it, tell him that you take Atlantis to your heart as your daughter?"

"Atlantis, my daughter-in-law? a Nereid, a sea-nymph, a siren, a woman dressed like Polymnia?" said Madame Caoudal, trembling.

"I can lend her one of my dresses," said Hélène, tranquilly.

"What would our friends say, what would the neighbours think?"

"That a more beautiful, noble, interesting girl never came into the Caoudals' house, that you have found here a daughter-in-law worthy of you. What is there, in short, to prevent you? Atlantis is a stranger, it is true. Yet I do not like the word

strange for her, — it does not suit her pure and peaceful face. That she is noble in heart and training, you are as fully convinced as I. And don't you think, dear aunt, that if her father has accepted René as a son, he must have made an effort to overcome a disinclination quite as strong as anything you can feel, to meet their wishes; and I am convinced that he has done so. Do not let him surpass you in generosity, Aunt Alice; go to them, they deserve it; and René would be so pleased!"

Hélène followed up her advocacy, and her face lighted up with generous animation, all unaware that Patrice had just appeared on the scene, and had stopped, with a look of admiration on his face.

"Well, Stephen, what news?" said Madame Caoudal, who was the first to see him.

"Nothing decisive so far; but I am not without hope, — relatively, be it understood, — for, at his age, it would be impossible to expect him to keep alive much longer. I have already applied electricity to him with good effect. For the present our fair hostess insists upon my coming to refresh and rest myself with you. To tell the truth," said he, as the two ladies busied themselves finding a seat for him and placing food before him, "I do not really need either rest or food. I never felt in better condition. What an enchanted place this is, what a delightful place to visit!"

"Has the invalid recovered consciousness?" inquired Madame Caoudal.

"Not yet, but it cannot be long before he does."

"Do you think it would be an intrusion if I went to his room? I should like him to find me there when he does, so that I may apologize for our having come, and to pay our respects to him," said the good lady, in a ceremonious manner; "and also," she added, sweetly, "I should like to help this young girl in the sad trial that is awaiting her, though we have, alas! nothing but sympathy to offer her."

"Be sure that she will appreciate it," cried Patrice, with warmth, "and she could not be in better hands. I have often seen death-beds, but never anything like this one. Think of it! That narrow couch where the old man is dying contains the whole universe for this young girl,—her sole companion, till now. Her behaviour is admirable; such simple dignity and self-control in her grief; and yet how heartrending the separation that is in store for her!"

"Let us go to her," said Madame Caoudal, promptly, "since you authorize it; I should reproach myself if I delayed."

They all rose and left the salon, the doctor leading the way to the sick chamber. Atlantis and René had resumed their place at the bedside. The old man, stretched on the purple couch, still lay as im-

movable as a statue, but there was nothing painful in his appearance. Some minutes previous, a faint warm tinge had given a little animation to his features. He looked so noble thus, that his two visitors were arrested by a feeling of reverence, as if they were on the threshold of a sanctuary. Atlantis and René came forward and begged them to be seated; but Patrice, accustomed by his calling to read people's hearts, and always ingenious in doing a kindness, felt sure that the mother and son were longing for a confidential chat; and, on the other hand, no one could possibly soothe and sustain the heart of Atlantis with more delicacy than Hélène.

"With your permission," he said, without further preamble, "I should like for an hour or two to be left alone with my patient. Here is a little salon," pointing to an adjoining room, "where you can find your mother a comfortable seat, my dear Caoudal, and be close at hand to help me if I want you. As for you, young ladies, I take the liberty, as a doctor, of ordering you to take a walk. I have no need of you just now; but your help, later on, may be necessary. It is, therefore, your duty to husband your strength, and a little change will distract your thoughts. I am sure Mademoiselle Atlantis would like to show her visitor these beautiful gardens."

"Will you?" said Hélène, with a smile that was irresistible.

"Oh, yes! I should like it," said Atlantis, raising her sweet eyes to her new friend's face.

The two girls withdrew. They walked along for some time in silence, each occupied with her own thoughts. Presently Atlantis spoke.

"Hélène," said she, "I want to ask you one thing, but I hardly know how to express myself. How is it that René, having known you, came to choose me?"

"I am René's sister," said Hélène, simply, "and consequently yours."

"My sister! you will be my sister! Oh! it is too much happiness in one day!"

"Dear Atlantis," said Hélène, throwing her arm round her, "do you not see that it is I who am the favoured one?"

The conversation went on in this strain. Many confidences were exchanged, and when, in two hours' time, René came to summon them to the sick-room, they were friends for life. Patrice wished them to be present, as Charicles showed signs of awaking. Assembled round the bed, they all waited in silence for the change which many signs warned them of.

All of a sudden, the most unexpected thing happened. The bell at the water-gate made itself heard, and twice the sound was repeated. Who could be ringing and wanting an entrance at such a depth beneath the water?

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SECOND RING AT THE BELL.

"MUST I open the door, sir?" said Kermadec, at length.

"Open the door? You speak as if it were nothing. Who in the name of all that 's wonderful could want to see us at this time? Such people ought to be left to wait till the Day of Judgment, — people who could knock at the door of a dying man's house like this."

A third peal, pressing, energetic, cut short his words.

"The determined rascals seem impatient," observed Patrice, smiling. "What will our charming hostess say to it? Must we allow these additional intruders to invade her dwelling?"

"Our solitude has come to an end forever," replied Atlantis, with dignified sweetness. "Charicles, I am sure, would permit these newcomers to enter his house. In his place I take it upon me to do so. Go, Kermadec, and greet the frightened travellers for him; offer them water for washing, bread and salt, and bring them to us when they have removed the dust of their journey hither."

"Dust! what a way to speak!" thought Kermadec, but turning to obey, however. "They are more likely to be covered with shells and sea-wrack; but we will see." He went off, swinging along with his sailor's waddle; and a few minutes elapsed. Then exclamations of surprise were heard, and suddenly Kermadec threw open the great door, and, slipping on one side, with a broad grin on his face, he announced in a loud voice:

"His highness, the Prince of Monte Cristo, and Captain Sacripanti desire to pay their respects to the ladies and gentlemen."

René and Patrice looked much annoyed, and a frown darkened Madame Caoudal's face, as she drew her shawl round her shoulders, by way of placing a barrier between herself and these tiresome people. Hélène could not help smiling. As for the daughter of Charicles, she placidly awaited the entrance of the visitors. They did n't keep her long waiting. The prince, on the best of terms with himself, as usual, his nose in the air, his eyes red and prominent, and his hat under his arm, came forward with the step of a conquering hero, and saluted the ladies. Behind him, Sacripanti, more redolent of hair-oil than ever, — with watch-chain, rings, and scarf-pin more in evidence than ever, — described a series of bows, which were meant to be obsequious, but were only grotesque.

"Captain Sacripanti was anxious to come with me in the character of interpreter," explained the prince, with a majestic wave of the hand. "All ancient and modern languages are equally familiar to him, and I thought that he would be of considerable service to me, in communicating my ideas to the interesting family who have fixed upon this place of residence. And *à propos*, my dear Caoudal, indulge, I beg of you, the wish which devours me to be introduced to this noble old man and his adorable daughter, for I presume that mademoiselle is his daughter?"

"Indeed," said René, in anything but the best of tempers, "I must beg you to notice that our host, Charicles, is not in a condition just at present to be introduced to any one. Explain, first of all, where you have come from, and how it is we see you in these parts. I cannot understand it at all!"

"These parts seem to be getting a little common and ordinary," said Kermadec, unceremoniously, used to express himself freely.

"Eh? what? — common?" said the prince, seating himself at his ease in an ivory chair, which creaked and groaned under his weight. "Know, my fine fellow, that any place the Prince of Monte Cristo might find himself could hardly be described as common! But, in replying to your question, my good Caoudal, I will, as the Irish do, ask you

another: Have I not already seen mademoiselle? Have not my poor eyes already had a glimpse of this miracle of grace and beauty on the occasion of our memorable descent in the diving-bell, from the *Cinderella*?"

"No doubt," answered René, impatiently.

"Well, there is no need for me to explain myself further. Any one who knows Monte Cristo, knows that, having once seen this marvellous beauty, it goes without saying that he must see her again." And he looked round upon them all with the liveliest satisfaction.

"You see you are supplanted, my dear Hélène," said Madame Caoudal, in a low tone, "but I don't think you will break your heart."

"Still that does not explain your presence among us," replied René, coldly.

"Ah, ha! my dear Caoudal, with your usual clear-headedness, you have hit the nail on the head. The diving-bell being, as no one knows better than yourself, inadequate for the purpose, I thought of making another, in which to descend alone, since you unexpectedly left me. And then, of course, I thought that the simplest thing to do was to learn your movements, and follow your example. My respected friend, Captain Sacripanti, for a certain pecuniary consideration, undertook to assist me in the matter."

"In other words, acted as a spy upon me," said René, shortly.

"Oh! spy is too strong a word, my friend. You have not hidden yourself, that I am aware of. Sacripanti, having learnt that you were having a submarine boat made, and that the public were admitted to see it, I had no difficulty in guessing what you proposed to do, and, as my princely coffers are not yet empty, I simply ordered another boat like yours to be made at the same makers, and mine was completed a few days after the *Titania*. I embarked with my dear friend, and here I am. I hardly expected," added the prince, gallantly, "to find so numerous and charming a company in this submarine kingdom."

"Any more, certainly, than one would have expected to see you," said René, brusquely. "But, Patrice, unless I am mistaken, our venerable host appears to be giving some signs of life. Would it not be well to renew our efforts to help him?"

"For which purpose, I need hardly say, I am entirely at your service," said Monte Cristo, coming forward in a dignified manner. "The laws of hospitality are sacred; I shall not think it derogatory to lavish every attention on this venerable old man, who, by the way,— if I may judge by appearances,— is extremely well born."

René turned from him, out of all patience, and the

doctor and he, assisted by Kermadec, betook themselves to the application of electricity interrupted by the advent of the prince. While they were engrossed with their efforts at the bedside, Monte Cristo and Aunt Alice, forgetting the skirmishes which were the chief feature of their intercourse a short while before, became, for the moment, the best friends in the world. Hélène and Atlantis chatted apart, much amused at the mistakes made by the Greek girl, in her endeavours to speak French, of which René had taught her a few phrases at brief intervals, during their long talks at her father's bedside. Sacripanti, alone, was unoccupied; but, without appearing to trouble himself at the ease with which the others grouped themselves, he came and went up and down the vast hall, ferreting and rummaging in corners, apparently finding very much to his taste all that he discovered.

At length, after a further application of electricity, Charicles sighed deeply, opened his eyes, moved his arms, and made an effort to rise. René passed his arm under his shoulders, and the old man looked round deliberately upon them all. He seemed much astonished at the sight of so many faces.

"Where am I?" he murmured. "Can I be already in the land of shadows? Who are these strangers round my couch, or do I still dream?"

"I am here, my dear host," said René, pressing his hand, affectionately.

"Atlantis!" added he, raising his voice.

Atlantis ran as lightly and noiselessly as a shadow, and, putting her arms round him, kissed him with tears of joy. The old man drew her feebly to his heart.

"Dear, dear child," he said, "once more I see thee again. But tell me, — who are these strangers? Where do they come from? Are they real people, or phantoms of my disordered brain? When I fell asleep, I left thee by my couch with our young friend, and now there seem so many of you. Who is this noble lady with the stately face and soft white hair. She looks like the mother of Hector, and her black robes make the paleness of her face the more striking. Who is that charming nymph? One might take her for thy sister, child, and yet she recalls to me the picture Homer drew of Briseis."

"She bears a name which will not sound strange to thee, father. She is called Helen," said Atlantis, smiling. "She is René's sister."

"An innocent and pure Helen," said the old man, kindly. "Come nearer, maiden; let my failing eyes contemplate thy youth and the beauty that adorns thy face. Doubtless, this man with the grave face and trustworthy look will soon be thy husband?

May heaven bless your union. He looks like René's brother."

This unexpected question brought the blood to Hélène's cheeks and to those of the doctor, and then, without intending any malice, he inquired:

"And that man of mature age, that remarkable looking person, is he also of your race? Thy father, perhaps, René?"

And the old man did not disguise the unfavourable impression produced on him by Monte Cristo.

This latter seemed to think he had waited long enough for an opportunity of coming to the front. He understood, by the direction of Charicles's glance, that he was making inquiries about him.

"Really, Caoudal, you don't seem to be in a hurry to present me," he said, in a reproachful tone. "Explain, I beg of you, to this venerable prince, that he may treat me quite as an equal; that my race, without flattering itself, can rival the antiquity of his, and that, in short, Monte Cristo is of quite as good a family."

And he drew himself up in his favourite pompous manner.

René, in a few words, explained to Charicles all that had happened during his long sleep. The old man, fortified by a few drops of good old wine which the doctor administered, listened with the liveliest interest to all the details; he thought he could

vaguely recall, as if a dream, hearing the deafening peal at the bell. He thanked Patrice with dignified simplicity for the pains he had taken on his behalf, complimented Madame Caoudal on the courage she had manifested in coming with her daughter, in so flattering a manner, that she would have felt overpowered if she had been able to understand a word of it. With a feeling for the beautiful, common to all Greeks, he had not omitted praise of the gracious motherly comeliness of the poor lady. He was much pleased at recognizing Kermadec, whose open face and lithe figure he had always admired. The only people whom he did not seem happy to see were Monte Cristo and his companion, and when he had satisfied himself that the rites of hospitality towards them had been observed, troubled himself no further about them. But that state of things did not at all suit the irrepressible Monte Cristo. After an agitated conference with Captain Sacripanti, in the corner of the hall, they both advanced to the bedside, Monte Cristo as bland as could be, and Sacripanti more like a Maltese valet than ever.

"Prince Charicles," stammered the Levantine in very bad Greek, "I come in the name of the Prince of Monte Cristo, of whose genealogy you have doubtless heard, to make a request to you."

"Speak," said Charicles, involuntarily knitting his brows.

"The Prince of Monte Cristo is still a bachelor, which cannot fail to surprise you, considering his age and the position he occupies in the world," began Sacripanti, pompously, while Madame Caoudal made René explain to her what it was all about.

"Why," continued the interpreter, "has my distinguished friend reached middle life, of which the poet says,— what was I saying?— why has he passed that time of life? Why has his ancient family run the risk of becoming extinct, when the first duty of a man of illustrious descent is to secure the continuity of his house? Why, in a word, is he still unmarried?"

"It is not for want of asking the hand of every young girl he has met, as we very well know," said Madame Caoudal, under her breath.

Sacripanti, having propounded this problem, stopped for a moment, rolling his eyes round to note the effect of his words upon the company. Charicles waited, with an expression of courteous resignation, for the outcome of all this preamble, while the prince nodded his head complacently.

"I will tell you the reason," suddenly ejaculated Sacripanti. "It is that the illustrious prince, the great lord, and most noble and puissant sovereign of the Island of Monte Cristo, has never, till now, found the shoe to fit his foot, — I mean a girl of sufficiently high birth to be allied to him."

"Oh! oh!" said Madame Caoudal, while Hélène pulled her gently by the sleeve to beg her to keep quiet.

"This girl he has found," resumed Sacripanti, theatrically indicating Atlantis, who was listening, in an unconsciously graceful posture, leaning on Hélène's shoulder. "There she is, noble prince. She is your daughter, the only person worthy, by reason of her birth, to become the mother of the sons of Monte Cristo. I have the honour, all unworthy as I am, of demanding her hand for him."

And he swept the ground with his cap, with a magnificent bow, while Monte Cristo, as red as a tomato, and his eyes nearly falling out of his head, advanced towards the astonished Atlantis, to press upon her forehead a kiss of betrothal.

"Stop!" cried Charicles, divining his intention; "calm thy transports. Prince Monte Cristo, my daughter is certainly honoured by thy coming to make this request, and we both thank thee; but her young heart is already given away. I, her father, have already placed her hand in that of this young man, the first of the human race to come to claim it. She cannot be thy wife, for she has already promised to be René's."

"Ah, ha!" said Madame Caoudal, to herself, carried away with the longing to put the unfortunate Monte Cristo in his proper place, "that will be

slightly embarrassing for you, my fine gentleman. Did any one ever hear the like? A young girl that he never set eyes on till twenty minutes ago! and less than a month ago he was deeply in love with a person who shall be nameless, but who is not very far from here. What has become of his senses?"

"My daughter and her young friend have my full consent," continued Charicles. "The only thing they have to wait for now is the consent of the admirable mother, who, in order to see her son, was ready to brave the terrors of the deep. Can we doubt that she will give it? What objection could there be to my Atlantis? Has she not been richly endowed by the gods with youth, beauty, innocence, an enlightened and pure mind, and sweetness of disposition? Oh, Atlantis, my well-beloved child, thou hast been a model daughter! Thy old father will die without regret since he can confide thee to this new family, so worthy to receive thee. Come near, noble woman, let our hands together join those of our children. Charicles, in giving her to you, will close his eyes in peace for the eternal sleep!"

He took his daughter's hand. René, Hélène, and Patrice drew near to Madame Caoudal, to induce her to comply. Atlantis, rather frightened, looked at her beseechingly; and one more glance in the direction of Monte Cristo, whose face expressed the most intense disgust, was sufficient to vanquish Aunt

Alice. With a resolute step she advanced to the bedside, and, seizing René's hand, joined it with that of Atlantis. Whereupon she burst into tears; but Atlantis threw her arms round her neck, and kissed her in so filial, respectful, and winning a manner, that the last remaining resistance was overcome.

"Well," said the poor mother, returning her kisses, "since it must be so I give up the dream I had cherished! It is absurd; no one ever heard of such a marriage; but there is no gainsaying that she is very charming. And when we have dressed her in one of your gowns, Hélène (you are about the same height), there won't be a girl in Lorient to come anywhere near her for style. This old man, her father, seems to be quite right; she appears to be the best little girl in the world, and once we get her away from here, and teach and civilize her a little—"

"Civilize!" interrupted René, indignantly, "Why, mother, look at her! She is a goddess, an Homeric princess! Civilize!"

"Well, well, I hear," said Madame Caoudal, somewhat piqued. "I agree to accept your Atlantis. You have nothing to reproach me with. Agree with me, on your part, that she dresses in a rather peculiar fashion, and that she would cut a funny figure at the *Préfecture Maritime*."

René was about to reply rather sharply to this, but

Patrice, with a few sensible words, put the belligerents on better terms with each other; and Madame Caoudal, having undertaken, of her own accord, to examine Atlantis's progress in French, they seated themselves side by side on a pile of cushions.

The docility and intelligence of her pupil soon won Madame Caoudal's heart, and suggested to her the hope that, by and by, her future daughter-in-law would be quite presentable. Monte Cristo, greatly offended by the snub that had been administered to him, kept himself apart. As to Sacripanti, he had altogether disappeared for some minutes, as also did Kermadec, when, all at once, the door burst open, as if by a gust of wind, and the interpreter, with haggard face and rumpled hair, appeared in the doorway.

"Good heavens! is the house on fire?" said Madame Caoudal, starting to her feet, and quite forgetting what sort of house she was in.

"What 's the matter? What has happened?" was the inquiry on all sides.

For some moments Captain Sacripanti paused, unable to speak. Rolling his terrified eyes, now raising his hand to his head as if with the intention of tearing his hair, and now pointing his finger in the direction from which he had come, he was a picture of abject terror, as grotesque as it was alarming.

"Tell us what is the matter?" cried René, running to him, and giving him a good shake. "He has gone mad, I think. Speak, you fool!"

"There, there," said he, at last, in a stifled voice. "The door; it is open!"

"What door?"

"I can't shut it! We are prisoners! Oh, dear! *Miserò di mè*, to think that I should have lived to see this day! It has ruined my career!"

"Prisoners because the door is open? What a singular idea!" said Madame Caoudal, in astonishment.

"What the devil is he chattering about?" cried Patrice. "Prince, your captain seems to have lost his wits? Can you understand a word he says?"

"By my faith, not much," said the prince, looking very uneasy; "but he certainly does seem beside himself!"

At last, by dint of repeatedly questioning him, they succeeded in getting at the cause of his fright. While poking about in corners, he came near the entrance of the house, and there he found Kermadec blustering and swearing with all his might, and, indeed, the worthy fellow had good reason to be angry! In leaving their boat, the prince and Sacripanti had wedged it side by side with that of René, which was placed just inside the entrance in the lower chamber. By an unlucky mischance, the heavy steel boat was leaning against the side of the *Titania* in such a way as to press against the door; so much so, that the moment it opened it barred the passage. It was impossible, owing to the weight of the thing,

to move it out of the way so as to shut the door; impossible, therefore, to refill the chamber with water, and, consequently, to float either boat! Thus, as Sacripanti justly observed, the open door threatened to keep them prisoners to the end of time!

Imagine, reader, the general horror when everybody grasped the situation. Every one except Charicles and his daughter, who could not understand the general consternation, flew to the little harbour, to find out the real state of affairs. Nothing could be more true than the conclusion they came to, that unless a miracle could move the door, there was no imaginable way by which they could be extricated from this deadlock.

For the first few moments they were completely stunned by the thought; but soon they relieved their feelings, each after his own manner. While the prince gave himself up to despair as noisy as that of his captain, and each abused the other roundly for his stupidity in leaving the boat in such an awkward position, Madame Caoudal took her niece in her arms to protect her to the best of her power; Hélène forced herself to hide the fear which lay like ice upon her heart; and Patrice, René, and Kermadec rose to the occasion, and eagerly discussed the means of getting to work to set the unlucky boat afloat again.

CHAPTER XX.

PRISONERS OF THE SEA.

SACRIPANTI's wild words at last awoke Atlantis's curiosity. She appeared on the scene, and, in a few minutes, was made acquainted with the disaster. Far from sharing the general agitation, she received the announcement with the utmost composure.

"What does it matter, after all?" said she. "Since René has all his people about him, what can he desire more, and what can he fear? Are we not perfectly happy and tranquil down here? Are we not all together? For my part, I should be content to remain here forever. We shall continue the history of the Atlantes, that is all. Charicles will teach you the secrets of his art of cultivating the soil and of living in comfort a few thousand feet below the sea-level. Phœbus, they tell me, has taken seventeen journeys round the world since I was born. During most of that time I have lived indifferent to outside things. Truth to say, curiosity succeeded in awakening in me an ardent desire to become acquainted with my kind, and for a while disturbed my tranquillity. But now my desire is sat-

isfied. I have you with me now, and you are as dear to me as my own family. Let us all live here, since fate has willed it so, — and, believe me, it is not an unhappy life!"

"What sublime simplicity!" cried Madame Caoudal, when she had taken in the young girl's meaning; "this poor child is gone out of her mind! Fancy my being changed into a siren, and ending my days at the bottom of this gulf! Can you imagine Hélène condemned to this prison? No, indeed! we must leave this place, if we have to swim back. For my part, I can never forgive the unlucky prince for having placed such a barrier in the way of our getting out of this hole, which we were so foolish as to thrust ourselves into. The situation is horrible, it is enough to drive one crazy."

"Dear aunt," said Hélène, grieved at the state of mind to which her adopted mother was reduced, "there is one consolation in our trouble, as Atlantis rightly says, and that is, that we are all together. Remember how you felt when we were so anxious about René's fate! How different from this! If we must remain here a few years — "

"Mercy on us," cried Madame Caoudal, "how you run on! Years! Do you think I have so many years to lose? It is very singular, but since I have realized that we are prisoners, I feel I cannot breathe. Positively it is close here; don't you find it so?"

"Mere fancy, I assure you, dear madame," said Patrice. "There is plenty of air to breathe, and it is of extraordinary purity. The truth is that, with so much pressure under our sky, we could hardly expect to get it so purified. And the apparatus for producing oxygen, which I have just examined, is of marvellous perfection."

"Hush, my dear Patrice," interrupted Aunt Alice, driven into a corner; "don't talk to me about oxygen apparatus, or of any of the odious phantasmagoria we are living in, for you make me boil over with impatience. Oxygen! when I think of the pure air in my garden! Ah, my poor garden! And my house! It will be in a fine state! I feel morally certain that Jeannette will take advantage of my absence to let the dust accumulate in all the corners. Yesterday was the day for her to have a thorough cleaning of the large drawing-room! I 'll be bound she never touched it,—or perhaps has done it for form's sake, without moving the furniture. These servants are all alike; the best of them are good for nothing!"

"Still, Jeannette is worth her weight in gold, I have often heard you say, Aunt Alice," replied Hélène, glad to find that household cares had for the moment diverted her aunt's mind from present troubles.

"Oh, no doubt! when I am there to superintend!

But I ask you what she is likely to do, when I have left her for the purpose of gadding about a few hundred thousand feet below water! Fortunately no one knows where I am, for, upon my word, I should be ashamed for any of my acquaintances to hear of it! Just think what Madame Duthil or Madame Calvert would say!"

"It certainly would have a droll effect on them," cried Hélène, with a fresh burst of laughter. "Madame Calvert has one deeply rooted idea: 'Travellers see wonderful things.' I have heard her say so scores of times. If we were to tell her about our adventures, she would have some reason to doubt the truth of them, I must own. Still we will take care never to breathe a word about it, if we are ever fortunate enough to get out of this hole. Oh, dear! every minute seems a century! René, Stephen, what is your opinion? Shall we ever leave this place, or shall we not? Yes, or no? Tell me frankly. I had rather know what I have to expect!"

René had just reappeared upon the scene, followed by Kermadec. They had both been to look at the lower air-lock, which was empty and open.

"My dear mother," said René, "I know you are courageous enough to prefer the truth to a reassuring lie. Yes, it is *possible* we may be able to get out; everything depends upon our being able to remove the boat that bars our passage. You have,

none of you, any idea of the formidable weight of this steel-plated boat, lying against the *Titania*, We are five strong men (omitting of course Charicles); you are three women, who by rights should together be equal to the strength of one ordinary man. Well, with only this force at our disposal, it is practically impossible that we could succeed in moving the obstacle one inch."

"Well, then, all is over with us, and we are buried alive," said Madame Caoudal.

"Oh, no; for, though it is impossible for us, with our united strength, to raise the boat, we ought to succeed, with the help of the wonderfully powerful mechanical contrivances at our disposal, in this marvellous submarine workshop. It is well for us that we have fallen among people intellectually endowed like the Atlantes!"

"Very well!" said Madame Caoudal. "Let us set to work without delay; and how soon shall we be able to get out? for I declare every minute seems an age."

"Alas! dear mother," said René, in a depressed tone, "try to take courage. It grieves me sorely to think that it was to seek for me, that you came down to this tomb!"

"What do you mean?" said she, turning pale. "Will it be long?"

"A long time."

"A week? A fortnight?"

"Perhaps months, if not years, my poor mother. Think what a long time it must take, and how much there will be to do, before we can either set up the necessary machinery, or construct a new air-lock outside this one. We should have it all to do ourselves. Only keeping up our hopes can make our work successful."

"Months, if not years!" repeated Madame Caoudal, utterly overwhelmed. "Ah, me! I shall never see France again. I beg your pardon for showing so little courage, but I declare the prospect freezes the blood in my veins! Years!"

"Oh, courage, Aunt Alice!" cried Hélène, taking her in her arms; "perhaps we may succeed sooner than that. And then, we are all together, — nothing can rob us of that satisfaction."

"Nothing but death, which cannot be long coming in this tomb," murmured Madame Caoudal. "Don't you remember, Hélène," added she with trembling lips, "the terror I have always had of being buried alive? Yes, since my early childhood it has been a perfect nightmare to me. I feel it now, I feel stifled, — look at me!"

"I entreat you, mother," said René, well nigh desperate, "not to give way to these dismal thoughts. Cheer up! Don't let us be cast down, but work our hardest. It will be the salvation of us."

But it was in vain that René and Patrice tried to keep up her courage, she seemed more and more demoralized and completely prostrated; and the resolution shown by Hélène had no influence over her whatever. Monte Cristo, too, was in an equally lamentable condition. He sat, dejected, utterly spent, his arms hanging down, his eyes fixed on vacancy; very different from the smart cavalier of an hour ago. As for Sacripanti, squatting against the unlucky boat, he exhausted himself in futile efforts to raise it on its keel by shoving it with his shoulder. He seemed to have completely lost his head. All at once Atlantis, whose observant eyes had followed every change of expression on the faces of her companions, left them for a moment and flew to her father's side. She soon reappeared at the door of the room, and, raising her clear voice, said:

"René, Hélène! come, all of you, to my father. I have told him about your trouble, and he wishes to speak to you."

Glad of this diversion, René took care that his mother should go with them to Charicles's bedside. They had to support her, the account of the disaster had shocked her so much. They all stood at the foot of the bed, round the seat which Atlantis had placed for Madame Caoudal. The old man, raised up on his pillows, received his guests with a frank

smile. The dignified calm of his brow, and the steady look in his deep-set eyes, made a great impression on them.

"You are looking better, father," said René, involuntarily. "It really looks as if you were going to regain your health yet."

"Do not deceive thyself, my child," replied he, with serenity. "My hours are numbered; the lamp is going out for want of oil. This flash of light will be the last. But, before I die, I wish to confide to you an important secret. Atlantis, pour me out a few drops of our ancestors' cordial. I have much to say, and my strength may not hold out."

Atlantis quickly obeyed, and, having moistened his lips with the cup, he resumed:

"I have always thought to carry my secret to the grave, confiding it only to my daughter, who, in her turn, would confide it to her son, as has been the practice in the family through the ages. But in view of the distressing accident that has befallen these guests who will take my place by my orphan's side, I hesitate no longer to impart it to them. René is quite right in thinking that it would take years to float the submarine boat again, if you should ever succeed in doing it. Happily there is another way of exit from the domain of Amphitrite. It is this. One of my ancestors, the sage Oulyssos, had lived all his days in Atlantide after it was sub-

merged. He never had any desire to enjoy life outside its walls, convinced, from what he had read, that happiness did not exist on earth, and that the Atlantes were the only people who retained the secret of it.

"When he reached the age of twenty, his father married him to the lovely Eucharis. This young girl had been afflicted, from her childhood, with a strange melancholy. Subject to attacks of cataleptic sleep, she always awoke from them with apparent reluctance, very sad, and casting a homesick glance through the crystal vault of her prison. When she married Oulyssos, he succeeded, by pressing her with questions, in acquainting himself with the cause of her sadness. She was dying with the longing to visit the earth, to breathe the pure air, to bask in the life-giving rays of the sun. In the crises of her sleep, she imagined herself transported thither. She lived there like an ordinary mortal, running about in the woods, enjoying the sunshine, and gathering the fruit and flowers from mother earth. The moments when these visions were vivid were the only happy ones she had ever known since she heard of the existence of the outside world. Every day, she said, the walls which surrounded her weighed more heavily on her shoulders, like a cloak of lead. Unless Oulyssos wished to see her die before his eyes, he must find some means of piercing the blue-green

shadows, and carry her towards the heavens, towards the stars, towards light and liberty.

"No one knew, at that time, of any means of rising to the surface. Deeply touched by the despair of his young wife, Oulyssos, who was a clever engineer, undertook to dig a tunnel extending to an island not far distant, in order to satisfy her desire of breathing the air of the living.

"Alas! before the twentieth part of it was constructed, poor, sad, homesick Eucharis had closed her eyes forever, without having once seen the blue sky, the subject of all her dreams. Oulyssos mourned her bitterly. But, even when, in obedience to his father's wishes, he formed new ties with the charming Lalagé, he never forgot his poor exiled Eucharis. Unwilling that another daughter of his race should perish like her, for want of seeing the earth, he continued to work at his tunnel, and, after years of labour, he finished it. That tunnel exists still. It is about thirty stadia* in length, and opens out on one of the Azores, a small island called Santa Maria, they tell me. By this road you can leave this place whenever you wish."

Madame Caoudal's joy on hearing this may be imagined, not to speak of that of the others, at the statement of this reassuring news. They each realized, when the heavy weight was lifted from their

* Four or five English miles.

hearts, how very unpleasant it would be to stay for an indefinite time under the water. If they had listened to Sacripanti, they would have set out at once. But Madame Caoudal, notwithstanding her impatience, was unwilling to leave the dying man in the state he was in. She contented herself by asking, with a happy, relieved face, to be told where the entrance to the tunnel was.

"It is not very far off," said Charicles, still calm and smiling; "it is behind the original wall of the grotto, under a mass of flowers. When you enter it, you have only to walk straight ahead, as soon as you have lighted the electric light. The floor is covered with fine sand, and the walls hung with choice creeping plants, for tapestry. You will walk, without fatigue, the thirty stadia on the road patiently excavated by my ancestor, and, at the end of it, you will find a crystal door fastened by a gold lock, and concealed by a rock at the bottom of a cave. This cave is on the shore of Santa Maria. Daughter, give me the sandalwood casket which is in my coffer; it holds the key."

Atlantis hastened to open the large ivory coffer at the head of Charicles's bed. She drew from it a sandalwood box of curious workmanship, and gave it to her father. The old man opened the casket, took out the key, and, after having shut his eyes for a few moments and murmured a few words which

sounded like an invocation, he handed it to his daughter, to whom, he said, it belonged by right, as the direct heiress of Oulyssos. Atlantis received it in respectful silence, fastened it to the gold chain she wore round her neck, and hid it in the loose folds of her snowy tunic. Charicles then drew from the casket a roll of papyrus, covered with ancient characters, and offered it to René.

"This," said he, "is the complete history of the territory of Atlantide, from the most remote times. Study it carefully, my son; thou wilt find in these pages fresh motives for venerating the race from which thy promised bride has sprung. And now," added he, "let us come to minor matters. Here is something which represents in a small space a fabulous sum; so my father told me when he left it to me. It shall be the marriage portion of my daughter. I dare say these pearls, these products of the oyster, are of great value in your country. Am I right?"

So saying, Charicles untied a little leather bag scented with a strange and powerful perfume, and shook from it a handful of exquisite pearls. They were of all shapes and sizes, from that of a pea to that of an almond. They were so brilliant, of such milky whiteness, and so unmistakably of the first water, that there was a general exclamation of admiration. Atlantis alone regarded them with indiffer-

ence, while Madame Caoudal and Hélène declared they had never seen anything so splendid. Charicles, much pleased with the admiration they elicited, made Atlantis bring him a second casket from the ivory coffer, and handed it with dignified grace to his guests. It contained quite a collection of antique jewelry. Though far from being as valuable as the pearls, the jewels were very precious, both intrinsically and from the peculiarity of their setting. To Madame Caoudal he gave a chain of superb black pearls, so fine that a small thimble would almost have held them. The chain was made of the same unknown metal as the ring given by Atlantis to René at their first interview, and which had never since that day been taken from his finger. Besides this, Charicles begged Madame Caoudal's acceptance of some long pins for pinning back her veil, made of gold, of most remarkable but exquisite workmanship; two clasps for a waist band, and several more clasps intended for fastening the peplum on the shoulder, as he explained to the good lady, who was inwardly horrified at the idea of appearing as a tragic muse. Then, turning to Hélène with a benevolent smile, the old man was pleased to clasp with his own hands two heavy gold bracelets round her slender wrists; to hang round her shapely neck a necklace of opals; and, lastly, to place in her beautiful hair some white bands embroidered with fine pearls, which gave her

saucy face something of the beauty and grace of the ancients. Atlantis laughingly threw over her shoulders a long tunic of white linen like that which she herself wore, clapping her hands when she saw her transformed into a Greek, and looking so charming. It would indeed have been difficult to imagine a prettier picture than the two girls made. Patrice and René received each a ring, and Kermadec an enormous cup of mother-of-pearl, mounted in platinum and standing on a base of red coral. Charicles begged his guests to accept in addition a bale of rich tapestry.

"That young fellow," said he, pointing to Kermadec, "will make light of carrying it away for you on his lusty shoulders." Then, taking out from the inexhaustible casket a second leather bag, much larger and heavier than the first, Charicles turned towards Patrice and graciously begged him to accept the contents, in recognition of his kind and skilful attentions to him. Patrice would have declined to receive it, but the old man insisted with fatherly kindness. How the young doctor's heart beat when Charicles untied the bag, and poured its contents out upon the bed! It was a collection of Greek and Phœnician coins, which must be of untold value, from their great antiquity. Patrice could not help casting a meaning glance at Hélène! Here was the fortune, the want of which was the only obstacle

which his pride kept up between her and himself. Charicles noted the look, and appeared to understand what it meant.

"Do not scruple to accept this offering from thy patient, young disciple of Æsculapius," said he, smiling. "It will, perhaps, enable you to begin housekeeping."

"But your daughter — René — " stammered he.

"My daughter is provided for beyond her needs," replied Charicles; "and, even if it were not so, can you doubt that she also would wish to recognize the service you have rendered to her old father? Go to; she is not ungrateful. Besides, she would never know the use of this metal, which you people who live on the earth value so much. My reason in giving it thee is that, where thou livest, such objects acquire importance. Accept it, young man, and let Charicles thank the gods, before his death, that he has been of use to some one."

Thus pressed, there was nothing to be done but to accept it with gratitude. Madame Caoudal, already delighted with the royal dowry conferred upon Atlantis, could not conceal the satisfaction of seeing Patrice's share in the gifts. In truth, there was some good in being down in this grotto, and the excellent woman began to understand her son's taste for travelling in unknown and dangerous regions.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAST OF THE ATLANTES.

GRATIFIED, and proud of her father's liberality, and happy at the approbation she read in her new friends' eyes, Atlantis had watched, with a pleased look on her face, the distribution of the sumptuous gifts; but her kind heart told her that something yet remained to be done.

"And the others," said she; "they are also our guests, father. Are you not going to give them some souvenir?"

"Where are they?" said Charicles; "bring them to me. If I have neglected them, it is because they were out of my sight. I praise thee, daughter," continued the old man, with a look of tender pride, "I praise thee for the thought. Thou art on the threshold of a new life — social life — and already thou knowest how to show courtesy; thou seekest to spare thy friends any possible slight; thou even thinkest of forestalling their wishes. Go. Thou canst boldly face the human family: thou wilt hold thy place there. And you, who are about to receive

her at your hearth and home, receive her with confidence; she will do you honour."

Meanwhile, Kermadec had gone in search of the prince and his companion, the former of whom he found rapidly inscribing in a note-book, notes and rough outlines, and the latter vaguely ferreting about here and there. Charicles addressed them, courteously:

"I am about to take leave of all my guests," said he to Monte Cristo. "Each has received from me a proof of affection or esteem. I wish also to leave thee a souvenir. Accept this ring. The material and the work are of no great merit. Its value lies in the history attached to it. It has been kept for four and twenty centuries in our family as a proof of the inexorable fatality of our lot. Polycrates, an arrogant and cruel prince, had experienced, notwithstanding his crimes, an unheard-of success in everything he undertook. Fearing that such prosperity might prove fatal to him, and that the gods, jealous of the happiness of mortals, might demand a severe reckoning from him for his good fortune, he resolved to offer them a propitiatory sacrifice, and, choosing a ring as a present to Neptune, he threw it into the sea, supplicating the god to accept his homage. A few days afterwards, on cutting open the turbot which his cook had just set before him, the prince found the ring in the stomach of the fish.

By this, he knew that the gods had refused his offering. A little while afterwards he perished, murdered by a crowd of his infuriated subjects, who rose in revolt against him. One of our family espoused a woman of his race, who brought among her jewels to her husband the tyrant's ring. Accept it, Prince of Monte Cristo, and, if ever the vanity of success darkens thy heart or thy mind, remember the story of Polycrates."

Paying but scant attention to Charicles's peroration, the prince accepted the ring with undisguised satisfaction. "Ah, ha! This is a curiosity," murmured he.

Devoured with the wish to astonish the masses on his return, by the account of the marvellous things he had seen, he had already been a prey to fears that he would not be believed; but here was a proof.

Meanwhile, Charicles had presented Sacripanti with another precious jewel, which had brought to the squinting eyes of that personage a gleam of triumph and pleasure.

"Sacripanti, my friend," said he to himself, "you see yourself well out of this business. Oh, blessed voyage! Oh, unexpected chance! I shall give up the trade of interpreter, and take a shop. This emerald is worth fifty thousand francs if it is worth a sou. As soon as ever I get to Paris, I shall invest

in Eastern wares and advertise them all round the Palais Royal. I shall live like a Turk; my dream! Oh, unlooked-for piece of luck! Oh, surprising old man! How he can throw away his goods like this, is what surpasses me."

Jubilant, and bowing to the ground, the captain backed out of the room. Monte Cristo soon followed him; and, with a last regretful look, Madame Caoudal and her niece retired, as also did Patrice, to the adjoining room, fearing that their prolonged stay might fatigue the dying man, and wishing, in any case, to leave him to say his last farewell to his daughter. There was a long interval, during which Charicles said nothing. He was not sleeping; his eyes showed that he was still in the full possession of all his faculties. He was deep in meditation, and, respecting his silence, Atlantis and René refrained from breaking it by sign or movement.

"I think," he said, at last, "that I have forgotten nothing. My instructions about the tunnel have been quite understood?"

"Perfectly," said René.

"You will leave an hour after my death, which cannot now be long delayed."

"We will obey you."

"Father," said Atlantis, beseechingly, "may I ask thee something?"

"Speak, my daughter."

"Why must thou stay here? Why not come with us? Would it not be better for us to carry thee with us. Perhaps the air of the upper world would give life to thee!"

"No, my child," said Charicles; "my journey is accomplished and must end here. I wish to sleep my last sleep here, and to be buried under the waters of this sea where I have lived my calm and simple life. I do not reprove thee for thy proposal, but I cannot agree to it. My desire is that one hour after my death—one hour, not later—you leave by the way I have pointed out. Half way through, you will find a room where you can rest and take a light repast before continuing your route. Once arrived at the crystal door, you will open it easily; and at once—understand me—you will emerge at once into the light of day, without waiting to see what will happen in the tunnel."

As he said these words an enigmatical smile spread itself over his emaciated features; which soon, however, regained their usual dignified serenity. "All is said!" added he. "I shall speak no more. Atlantis, go, and take one last look at the dwelling where thou wast born, and which hath sheltered thy infancy and developed thy youthful graces. Go to the garden where we have taken our daily walks together; take with thee thy newly found sister—herself a sister of the Graces—gather with a pious

hand the flowers with which thou wilt lovingly deck my funeral couch. Once more I bless thee. Leave me to commune with myself. I will say no more."

Strictly observant of her father's commands, and having pressed a kiss upon his forehead, Atlantis turned to go into the garden, requesting Hélène to assist her in the mournful and gracious task; and Hélène, gratified at having been named in so solemn a moment, hastened at once to help her to the best of her ability to gather the flowers. René, Patrice, Madame Caoudal and Kermadec busied themselves with preparations for their departure; taking care that some one should be near enough to the dying man's bedside to hear him breathe, while respecting the solitude in which it pleased him to enfold his last hour. Before going into the garden, the young girls, as Charicles had desired, began by saying good-by to the apartments of the palace in turn. And this pious pilgrimage was an enchantment to Hélène.

"What!" she said to herself, as Atlantis took her to her own room — exquisite casket, fit for such a pearl — furnished with mother-of-pearl and transparent draperies; then to the other parts of the sumptuous dwelling, workrooms, rooms for resting, dining-rooms, and rooms for pure ornament; then to servants' apartments, kitchens, various offices, baths, and different workshops and studios. "What!" she repeated, completely dazzled, "talk of civilizing these

refined people! Have we anything to teach them? It is we who need to learn of them. It is to be feared that Atlantis will find the arrangement of our houses rudimentary! Happily, Aunt Alice is a notable housewife, and propriety and good order reign at 'The Poplars,' and we have no need to blush for our offices and utensils. But for that I should feel positively humiliated at being shown all this magnificence. But enough of these thoughts of commonplace rivalry! Is it likely that Atlantis, this living poem, will amuse herself with disparaging anything she finds under our roof? Dear child, she will see, I am sure, only the beautiful side of everything, and all her judgments will be indulgent and gentle, like herself!"

Arrived at this point in her reflections, Mademoiselle Rieux threw her arms round the neck of her companion, who certainly had not the least idea of the motive of this sudden display of tenderness, but who accepted her caress without troubling to find out the reason, and returned it with interest. The girls had arrived at a peristyle of red marble that Hélène had not seen before, and which opened out upon Atlantis's own garden. Hélène stopped, entranced. This surpassed all the glory and splendour she had yet seen. The balmy retreat, which had belonged to the mother and grandmother of Atlantis, and before them to a series of ancestresses,

this privileged enclosure was, in truth, an enchanted garden.

Facing the entrance of the portico, a wide avenue of giant rose-trees opened out, and led in the distance to an endless variety of flowering shrubs. On the lawns were baskets of roses. The side alleys led to masses of roses. Borders, beds, grottoes, shrubberies, rustic seats, shady nooks, everywhere were planted roses, everything was enveloped, submerged in roses; but not without arrangement of colour. From a blush rose to a deep purplish red, from deep velvety carnation to the purest white moss-rose, the eye was conducted by insensible degrees. No harsh or careless combination offended the eye; and, if by an ingenious contrast, now and then, at the root of a flaming bush of briar roses a tea-rose bent its pale head, one could discern, under this capricious arrangement, the hand of an artist or a poet.

"Let us sit here," said Atlantis. "This was my mother's garden. Very often, Charicles has told me, she came here in a melancholy mood, as if smitten with a presentiment of her early death."

"You lost her, then, when you were quite little?" inquired Hélène, timidly.

"I never knew her."

"Nor I," said Hélène, with moistening eyes; "I never knew my mother, and, less happy than you,

Atlantis, I lost my father also when I was in my cradle. But Aunt Alice has made up to me for all I have lost. She will also be a mother to you. She is so good and kind!"

"Yes," said the Greek girl, "I feel strongly attracted to her. But we must get to work. Let us gather the flowers out of this garden to cover my father's funeral couch; that is his expressed desire."

They were for a long time occupied in rambling about, looking for the finest roses they could find, cutting with golden scissors the choice ones, and leaving any that had any defect. Soon the armfuls they gathered were more than they could hold. They laid them down on a mossy bank, and called René and Patrice to carry away the harvest.

"It is time," said Patrice to Hélène in a low voice; "his end is drawing very near. It is impossible to imagine a more august or peaceful death."

"Courage, dear Atlantis," said René to his betrothed. "A cruel separation awaits you; but do not forget that I share all your grief. I wish I could bear it all for you."

"I will be courageous, I promise you," said she, with straightforward simplicity. "You have seen me, René, in these trying hours, so full of poignant grief, give way sometimes to weakness. I have trembled and wept; that has displeased my father, and he has gently reproved me. I know now what

would please him. I will not disturb his last hour with noisy grief."

They had come to the side of the dying man. The flowers were placed on a low table, near. Without loss of time Atlantis began to dispose them round him with a light hand, Hélène handing them to her. From time to time she stopped to look at the face of the demi-god in its repose; the only face she had known for so long a time, and that she was about to lose forever. Then a tear would fall from her eyes, like a drop of dew, into the heart of one of the roses; but no contraction of her features marred their beauty; no sob disturbed the stillness. Her behaviour was all that Charicles had wished. Soon, the funeral preparations were complete. When Hélène had handed her the last flower, she retired to the place where Madame Caoudal was standing, her face buried in her handkerchief, quietly weeping. René came forward to Atlantis, who was standing at Charicles's right hand; the doctor took the dying man's hand to feel the last feeble pulsations. Suddenly, Charicles opened his eyes; met those of Atlantis intently fixed on him; one peaceful smile, and the eyelids drooped.

"All is over!" said the doctor, in a stifled voice.

Some minutes of deep and solemn silence followed; each felt the same mysterious awe in the presence of the relentless visitor. Atlantis was the

first to shake off the feeling of stupor. Disengaging her hand from that of René's, who manifested his pity by a fraternal pressure, she left the side of the couch, and, taking down the golden harp, she came and took up her place once more, opposite to her father's resting-place. For an instant she waited with bowed head, in a pose of inexpressible grace, gathering her thoughts together. Then her fingers wandered over the strings, drawing from them a few hesitating sounds. At last she raised her head, and her pure voice uttered musical phrases now definite and clear. In simple words she sang of the glory and the great doings of the departed members of her house; she recounted the long prosperity of the Atlantes, then of the scourge that had fallen on them; of her mother, gathered in the flower of her age; of her deserted cradle, and of the old man and the child alone remaining of the illustrious race. Then she told the story of Charicles, of his knowledge, virtue, and power, and lastly of his death, as august and noble as his life.

Behold, now he has departed! His spirit already wanders on the mysterious border-land of the shades. Already, doubtless, his ancestors have received and saluted him, the last scion of their race. For her, the flower, cut off from this ancient tree, another destiny is in store. Henceforth she will observe other rites, will obey other laws, will have another

country. But she accepts them joyfully, for she follows her spouse, by her father's command.

All this was sung in a sweet, low voice, by the young Melpomene; it was nothing resembling the music of the future, it was that of the past. She struck a final chord and ceased, letting the lyre fall from her. The last duties had been fulfilled. Charicles had been obeyed to the letter. The hour had come to leave. René and Patrice exchanged a look which meant that the departure had better be hastened. Lost in contemplation, Atlantis seemed to see nothing of what was going on around her. René took the lyre gently from her, hung it on the wall, and, taking her to the bedside, allowed her to kiss the white hand. Then he authoritatively took her hand in his own and turned towards the point from which they were to start. She obeyed him unhesitatingly. Exactly one hour after Charicles had breathed his last sigh, the travellers entered the tunnel.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RETURN TO THE LIGHT OF DAY. CONCLUSION.

THE floor of the tunnel was, as Charicles had said, covered with fine yellow sand, as soft as velvet to the feet. The walls, as high as the path was broad, were tapestried with creeping plants, which Hélène would fain have stopped to admire, but René and Patrice, vaguely anxious to get safely to the entrance of the cave at the other end, allowed no one to loiter for a minute. According to the instructions they had received, they turned on the electric light, which lit up the passage as far as the eye could see. They pursued their way in silence, at first. Each felt under the influence of the scene through which he had passed. They were haunted by the picture of the old man lying forever on his solitary purple couch.

Atlantis walked along with the light step of a young goddess, mute, and with a cloud of sadness on her sweet face; her large eyes, oblivious of all around her, seemed fixed on a vision called up by her own thoughts. Doubtless, they went back to her past life, forever closed to her. She saw once

more the austere but tender parent who had guided her, step by step, and whom she had just left forever. On the threshold of her new life, she shrank, for a moment, from the strangeness of it all, and bid a long farewell to all that she had known and loved. Her innocent heart registered a vow to gain the affection of her new kin, to become, indeed, Hélène's sister and Madame Caoudal's daughter.

Hélène, respecting her silent grief, walked by her side, with their arms interlaced. They understood each other without the need of words; and when the tears, which had slowly gathered in Atlantis's eyes, fell and obscured her view, Hélène, by a tender pressure of her arm, made her feel that, if she had lost a father, she had gained a sister. Atlantis then turned to her with a loving look, and every mute caress increased the affection which, by the happy privilege of their age, they had formed for one another at first sight.

Madame Caoudal followed them, between Patrice and René, and behind them came Monte Cristo majestically, escorted by Sacripanti.

Kermadec brought up the rear, whistling softly a Breton air, and thinking what a long story he should have to tell his countrymen when he found himself once more on the deck of the vessel. They proceeded thus, without stopping, and almost in silence, for about two hours, when Patrice concluded that

they must have got half way through. He was confirmed in his conjecture by observing that the arched roof, rising abruptly to a higher level, formed a sort of rotunda in which the moss-covered walls surrounded a stone table. It looked like the place for a halt. Madame Caoudal, notwithstanding her ardent desire to see the sunshine again, began to show signs of fatigue. They decided, therefore, to allow themselves a short time for rest, so that they might finish their journey at a quicker pace. Kermadec, in a twinkling, had spread the softest of the tapestries he carried on the stone seats round the table, and begged the ladies to be seated.

Madame Caoudal did not need a second invitation to comply; she was even seen — a rare thing with her — to lean back against the wall. For Madame Caoudal had been brought up by a strict mother, and was in the habit of holding herself as straight as the letter *I* when she sat. She often deplored the self-indulgent and bad manners of modern times. Nothing, she thought, could be worse form than for a young man or a young woman calmly to seat himself or herself in an easy chair. And she had a perfect horror of padded furniture; too comfortable, in her opinion, and she often said, drawing up her slight figure, that if her mother and grandmother, who both lived to be over eighty, had "kept their shape" to the last, it was owing to their

way of carrying themselves. Truth to say, the unconscious dignity of Atlantis's bearing had from the first prejudiced her in her favour, and it is certain that a sea-nymph who had not carried her head well, or had been the unfortunate possessor of round shoulders, or had received her visitor in an unceremonious manner, would have had a small chance of finding favour with her.

"We are not badly off here," said Madame Caoudal, not concealing her satisfaction; "but I confess I begin to feel hungry. I really think I could eat something, though I consider it a bad habit to eat between meals."

"One minute," said Kermadec, briskly. "You don't catch my father's son setting out on a journey without provisions. The storeroom down there was well provided with them, and see, I have profited by that."

So saying, Kermadec opened a large linen bag which he carried in his belt, and which he had filled as full as it could hold with some mysterious contents, all knobs and lumps. He drew from it, one after another, three bottles of rare old wine, small rolls of bread of a curious shape, dried sweets, dried fruit, and several tablets of cocoa, which the Atlantes, it appeared, had discovered long before the Spaniards.

"By my faith!" said that thoughtful and very

useful person, "I have brought the best that I could find."

"And the best is excellent," said Madame Caoudal, tasting some exquisite fruit, resembling a peach. "Really, one would n't object to being a vegetarian if one could always get such food as this."

"On my honour, madame, saving your honour's presence, I would much sooner have a simple beefsteak," said Kermadec; "but this is not to be despised, all the same."

"Come, come; you prefer it to salt beef," said René, knowing the horror sailors have of the preserved beef, which is the chief part of their daily rations.

"Salt beef? pah! I want none of that," said Kermadec, in disgust. "Well, yes, I prefer this."

And a roll covered with a thick layer of preserved fruit disappeared between his lips in proof of his words. Hélène succeeded in persuading Atlantis, though as a rule she drank nothing but water, to sip a little wine, and she delicately peeled a magnificent plum of a velvety blue-black kind; but, abstemious as a little bird, she had quickly finished her meal. Hélène also was just rising from hers, and, seeing her unoccupied, Patrice rose, and, turning towards the passage through the tunnel, said:

"Hélène, come and look at this curious plant."

Hélène meekly followed him. Madame Caoudal

and René were engrossed with Atlantis, whom they were trying to cheer. Monte Cristo, Sacripanti, and Kermadec were "making short work," as the sailor expressed it, of the three bottles of wine, which were quickly emptied. Nobody took any notice of them.

"René has become engaged, at last," said Patrice, as soon as they were out of hearing. "Lucky fellow!"

"Are you jealous?" said Mademoiselle Rieux, not without a touch of malice. "Poor Stephen! Have you had views with respect to Atlantis, like our dear prince?"

"With respect to Atlantis? Do you believe that for a moment, Hélène?"

"How do I know?" said the young girl, with a laugh to hide her embarrassment. "These plants are indeed very curious. Could n't we take some specimens away with us?"

"Never mind the plants, Hélène," said Patrice, taking both her hands in his. "It was not for that I brought you here."

"Why, then, in heaven's name?"

"To ask you a question on which the happiness of my life depends. To know whether it will be better for me to remain buried down here than to return to the land of the living, if I am to vegetate there without you! To ask you, Hélène, if you can love me well enough to be my wife."

Hélène raised her eyes to his with a serious, trustful look. "Yes, Stephen," replied she, simply. "I will be your wife when you wish it."

And Patrice, deeply moved, his eyes wet with tears, pressed her hands to his lips.

"I have only one thing to reproach you with," continued she, smiling, "and that is to have waited for Charicles to enable you to speak to me. Oh, for shame! for shame! Do you really believe that I needed his collection of antique coins to accept you gladly?"

"*You*, certainly not!" cried the young doctor, with fervour. "Still, I should not have ventured to speak, but for that. Now that the dear old man has broken down every obstacle, — forgive me, but without suitable means of providing for you, I should not have asked you."

"Do you know, you are by no means flattering," said the girl, in a tone of banter. "I must be either very ugly or very disagreeable for you to think that my miserable fortune could stand in the way."

"You foolish girl! Ah! if I could have ruined you at a blow! reduced you to beggary, — what a dear little beggar you would have been!"

"Thank you, for your kind wishes," cried Hélène, with a hearty laugh. "Then, if you had been rich, and I poor, you would not have despised me?"

"Do not say such a thing, even in joke."

"Why, then, do you give me credit for sentiments more vile than your own?" cried she, triumphantly. "No, no, I must scold you. I have fretted in silence long enough! If you only knew the number of times I have almost told you so! I see now that — I was not absolutely odious to you — but, because of that abominable money, you thought it necessary to fly away from me — yes, it is true — to run away from me! No; mundane conventionalities now and then are too stupid for anything!"

"Listen, Hélène," interrupted Patrice, "not so stupid, after all! That I, a man in the prime of life, a hundred times better equipped, a hundred better instructed than you, you poor little thing,—"

"Thanks again, sir!" replied Hélène, laughing, and making a little courtesy.

"Yes, I mean what I say, and you know what I mean! That I, I say, should accept a place as invited guest in your house, and have allowed you to provide for me out of your abundance, would have been a state of things entirely out of the question. You must admit that!"

"All I know is, that I approve of you just as you are," confessed Hélène, with a sweet look. "But, indeed, you have often made me very angry!"

"René, René, what can have become of your cousin?" they heard Madame Caoudal exclaim in alarm.

"Not far off, mother; Patrice is taking care of her," replied he, ingenuously.

"Indeed, I have acted very inconsiderately," said Patrice. "Let us go and beg of your aunt to accept me as a nephew," and he took Hélène's hand and placed it proudly on his arm.

"Do you think," continued he, in a low voice, "that but for Charicles I could have offered myself to you with such a light heart? I know that in your opinion these considerations are of no importance. But all the same, I feel deeply grateful, and shall never cease to feel grateful, to the fine old patriarch for the help he gave me!"

It was enough to see Hélène coming towards her, leaning on Patrice's arm, and to note the expression on their faces, for Madame Caoudal to guess what had happened. And, after all, as she had been compelled to relinquish the dream she had so long cherished of uniting her son to her adopted daughter, what better husband could she desire for Hélène, provided for as Patrice would be henceforth? In a few rapid words all was arranged, and with the best grace in the world, though suppressing the ghost of a sigh, Madame Caoudal embraced the happy lovers.

Meanwhile, as these interesting affairs were arranging themselves, a dispute had arisen between Monte Cristo, Sacripanti and Kermadec. Warmed

with the wine he had taken, the prince forgot all about his matrimonial projects; and Sacripanti, the terror he had lately undergone. Both were inspired with the brilliant idea of returning to take possession of the treasures accumulated in the palace they had left behind them, now that they had discovered such an easy exit from it. Whereat, Kermadec, bringing his fist down with a thump on the table, opposed it with an absolute veto.

"What has it to do with you, you fool?" cried Monte Cristo, when he had recovered from his surprise at being thwarted. "You have only to come back with us and your fortune will be made."

"No, your highness, asking your pardon, you will do no such thing," reiterated Kermadec, with the obstinacy of his race.

"And why, may I ask, if you please?"

"Because no one has any right to go back there without my officer's permission, and he will not give it."

"I should very much like to know what right he has over the grotto."

"He has the right of having discovered it, and of espousing the heiress of the old gentleman."

"But if he were to go there, himself?"

"Monsieur René would never go back there, seeing that the deceased gentleman, with almost his last breath, said that he wished to sleep quietly there

till the day of judgment. And it does n't do to trifle with the wishes of the dead, my good gentleman, prince or no prince."

Monte Cristo nearly choked with rage; then, shrugging his shoulder, wrathfully:

"And who is to prevent my going, if I choose?" cried he, his eyes almost starting out of his head.

"I, Yvon Kermadec, forbid it," resolutely replied the young sailor. "You are not my officer, sir prince, and I would break your head open sooner than let you go back without Monsieur René's consent."

In vain the prince and Sacripanti, indignant at this unexpected assumption of authority, shouted and swore at the Breton. He stuck to his point, and nothing could shake him. The quarrel was becoming serious, when René gave the order to prepare to resume their journey. This created a diversion. They all set forward. Kermadec, blocking up the path behind Monte Cristo, kept his eye upon him lest he should attempt to put his sacrilegious design into execution. The prince would fain have rebelled against the order to march, but Kermadec chose not to understand him, and the journey was continued, notwithstanding his noisy protestations.

In due time, after an hour or so's march, they arrived at the crystal door. They caught sight of it

at some little distance. Brilliantly illuminated with electric light, it looked like a fairy entrance to a new world. Atlantis, excited and impressed, stopped and clasped her hands, at the sight of the sparkling barrier which had so long separated her from the liberty she had dreamed of. Then she sprang forward as lightly as Diana might have done, and was the first to reach it. Standing, with the gold key in her hand, her face turned towards her companions, she seemed, in her white drapery, like some young sister of the wingless conquerors, created by the chisel of her great Greek ancestors.

When they had all overtaken her, she gave one long look back on the path by which she had come, clasping her hands with the inspired gesture of a priestess. Her face pale, her eyes with a thoughtful look in them, she raised her clear voice, which resounded and then died away in the distance.

"Charicles, Atlantide, farewell!" she repeated three times.

She waited till the echo of her voice was lost in the vaulted roof; then turning resolutely, she placed the key in the lock, turned it, and opened the great door. No sooner had she done so, than a tremendous noise resounded from the bowels of the earth, at a considerable distance behind the travellers. For an instant they paused, confounded,

utterly unable to understand what could have happened.

Five minutes had hardly elapsed, when a noise like a cataract was heard, and they saw great waves let loose, and roaring through the tunnel, which died down at their feet, covering them with foam. They had only time to hurry out of the cave; the sea, as if pursuing them, rushed out behind them, destroying forever the submarine passage. They understood then what Charicles had done. Determined to bury Atlantide with himself, he had contrived a mechanical arrangement which should be set in motion by the opening of the door. Forever, therefore, he would rest in peace on his funeral couch. The sea, so long kept at bay by human will alone, had resumed its power. The waters had destroyed the birthplace of Atlantis, and seaweed would cover forever the fabulous treasures heaped up by her ancestors. The travellers, stricken dumb by surprise and awe, stood at the entrance of the cave, listening to the huge waves as they broke against the rocky walls of the tunnel.

They stood thus for a long time. Kermadec was the first to speak.

"At any rate, prince, you will not go back now," said he, in a tone of triumph.

Monte Cristo started angrily forward, indignant at having been baffled by the sailor, forgetting the

fright he had just had of being swept away altogether. Hélène, throwing her arm around Atlantis's waist, drew her out of the cave, for the poor girl seemed turned to stone, and, the rest following in their steps, all emerged into the open air.

A narrow sandy beach, shelving gently towards the sea, reflecting the last rays of the setting sun, was spread out before them. Behind them, dark rocks that had so long concealed the secret door reared themselves, forming at the sea-front a sort of portico to a mysterious temple. To right and left of them the rocks sloped gradually, opening up to their view smiling stretches of level land. A promontory, boldly jutting out into the sea, bore on its surface trees of a hundred years' growth, whose branches, covered with creeping plants, bathed themselves in the transparent waters. Thousands of birds were chanting, with full throats, their vespers to the setting sun. It was a calm and peaceful scene, and inspired them with fresh courage and happiness.

Atlantis, supported by Hélène, and recovering from her astonishment, shaded her eyes with her hand and looked around her with a long, steady gaze.

"At last, at last," murmured she, "I see thee, O sun! Earth, I belong to thee henceforth! The treacherous sea cannot take possession of me again!"

She fell on her knees with the unconscious and

dignified grace which characterized all her movements, and reverently kissed the soil. Madame Caoudal was somewhat shocked at this action. But everything the Greek girl did was so natural, and at the same time so noble, that no one dreamed of blaming her. Kermadec, moreover, distracted their attention from her.

"The foreign young lady is quite right," said he, "and we ought to kiss our old mother earth, for we were very near losing the chance of seeing her again." And, throwing himself on his knees, he took off his cap and piously gave the shore a sounding kiss.

"Come," said Patrice, shaking himself together and rousing the others from the reverie into which they had fallen, "we must look out for some lodging where we can get shelter, until we can find some means of returning home again."

The travellers, leaving the rocks, took their way across the meadows that bordered the sea. They had not gone very far before they caught sight of the low roofs of a fishing village on the beach. Patrice and René went on ahead, as scouts, and soon came back to take the whole of the party to the best house they could find in the neighbourhood, and which had been placed at their disposal by its owners. One may imagine Atlantis's surprise on seeing for the first time — she who had lived all her

days like a princess in a fairy tale — the wonders of civilization to be found in the humble cottage of a fisherman of the Azores! when she had to use, instead of gold and silver and mother-of-pearl vessels, which she had always used for the commonest purposes, the rude, primitive, half-baked pottery she now saw for the first time! But, in her delight at being among human beings, — children, young girls, old men, and — oh, joy! — a cow and a large watch-dog, — she forget everything else.

The fishermen listened, all in good faith, to the account the travellers gave of themselves, which was true enough, — that they had lost their submarine vessel in the sea. In reply they stated that an American packet was expected to pass, in the course of a week, by which they could return to their own country.

The week passed very quickly. Madame Caoudal's first care was to manufacture from the coarse blue serge, worn by the wives and daughters of the fisher-folk, a "civilized" costume for Atlantis. And, in truth, when she appeared smiling, but a little embarrassed in her new attire, with her long plain skirt, her puffed sleeves, and a large straw hat plaited by Hélène, her small feet shod in the Sunday shoes of a young girl of the village, there was a general cry of admiration, she looked so charming.

Madame Caoudal smiled, proud of her work. As

for Hélène, she sighed as she folded up the beautiful vestments lately worn by her friend.

"I shall carry them away with me," said she, "and take care of them always. Yes, she looks sweet in her new costume, but it is only the beauty of an ordinary pretty girl, whilst formerly it was that of a goddess!"

"Bah!" retorted Madame Caoudal, "she is much better as she is; she would have taken cold the very first thing, with hands and feet bare like that. And then, think of her going on board an American steamer in that 'get-up.' Goddesses are all very pretty under the water, but, for my part, I prefer to see a young girl properly dressed."

The travellers returned to France, and two months afterwards a double marriage was celebrated in Paris, in order to avoid the indiscreet curiosity of a provincial town. Madame Caoudal, completely reconciled to the new state of things, was as much in love with Atlantis as she had been with Hélène.

By the end of six months, the young Greek girl spoke French as well as any Parisian. She adapted herself to her new surroundings with exquisite taste, and the only thing her mother-in-law had to complain of in her was, that her great beauty attracted too much attention in the street. René didn't complain of it. Every day he made some

fresh discovery of the perfection of her heart and mind.

As to Patrice and Hélène, their opinion of one another had been so long formed that they found no change in each other. Each thought the other perfect. So that everything was arranged for the best in this best of worlds.

The only cloud over this delightful state of things was the attitude of Monte Cristo. René had begged him, very seriously, never to reveal anything about their fantastic voyage, not wishing to provide foolish gossips with the story of his wife and her submarine origin. He pretended not to hear. Even though giving a reluctant consent, out of pure politeness, to omit any details of Charicles and his daughter, he persisted in the project on which he had set his heart from the first, — of presenting to the Academy of Science an account of his adventures. And, after labouring long at his self-imposed task, he did so. Unfortunately for him, he produced a story which so far surpassed the facts, extraordinary enough in themselves, that no one believed a word of it.

In vain he struggled and blustered, buttonholed each of his co-scientists; nothing but the innate feeling of ordinary politeness prevented him from invoking the testimony of his companions; whatever he said or did, he won the reputation, and will forever retain it, of trying to rival a Barbary ape.

Sacripanti, the only one who would have confirmed his assertions, but whose testimony, truth to say, would have been of doubtful value, had disappeared in a manner which remained inexplicable, until René, one day, discovered the loss of one of the most magnificent of Atlantis's pearls. Monte Cristo, furious at the discovery, would have pursued the thief, but, by common consent, they decided to leave him alone, and all trace of him was completely lost.

René sent in his resignation to the minister of the navy, reserving, however, the right to resume active service if his country needed him. Atlantis was perfectly happy among her new relatives, and in her affectionate heart, her husband, her mother, her brother Patrice, and her sister Hélène had taken the place of the august old man whom they had buried in the depths of the sea, though she was very far from forgetting him.

But, before long, René remarked a cloud of melancholy on her sweet face. He often heard her sigh at sight of the sea. Sometimes she had a homesick look. Quick to become alarmed, René's devotion enabled him easily to unravel the secret of her sadness. The poor child was longing for her ocean home, the enchanted silence of the bottom of the sea, and the wonders in the midst of which she had grown up. Then, without saying anything to her,

René sold a few of the pearls given him by Charicles. Then he made use of all the experience he had gained, and set all his ingenuity and his science to work to build for her, at the bottom of the Bay of Juan, a beautiful submarine villa, to which they had access by a submarine boat. What joy for the young wife, when her husband, one day, under the pretext of taking her for a stroll along the shore, brought her suddenly to the threshold of her new dwelling, a humble imitation of her fairy-like birthplace!

Atlantis had now nothing more to wish for. She and her husband passed a good third of their time in this retreat, and Hélène and Patrice occasionally visited them there. In this enchanted solitude, oblivious of their kind, of ugly surroundings and petty cares, waited on only by the faithful Kermadec, who had finished his term of service with the fleet, and was as devoted as ever to his officer, they led an enviable life.

Madame Caoudal declined all invitations to visit them. She declared she was afraid lest Monte Cristo should, by chance, come down upon them once more, and make them and their guests prisoners for good and all.

THE END.